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Fifty-fourth Session

Official Records

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New York

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Address by Mrs. Mireya Moscoso, President of the Republic of Panama

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Panama.

Mrs. Mireya Moscoso, President of the Republic of Panama, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Panama, Her Excellency Mrs. Mireya Moscoso, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Moscoso (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Panama is particularly gratified to welcome your election, Sir, to the presidency of the General Assembly at this session. We are pleased that the noble people of Africa, whose aspiration to progress is shared by Panamanians, are so well represented in this forum, with you at the head of our deliberations and another distinguished African, Mr. Kofi Annan, leading the Secretariat. We join in the congratulations conveyed to you in recognition of your capacity and your skills, as well as in the expressions of gratitude addressed to the Secretary-General for his dedication to the Organization and his tireless efforts to maintain international peace and security.

To your predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay, I also wish to convey our appreciation for the outstanding way in which he conducted our debates and his contribution to the success of the deliberations of the Assembly.

My warmest congratulations, on behalf of the people and the Government of Panama, go also to the representatives of Kiribati, Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga, States which were admitted to the United Nations on the first day of this session. This event confirms beyond question the universal and inclusive nature and purpose of this body devoted to fostering world peace and peoples' well-being.

Today I am speaking on behalf of a young, proud nation that has written some illustrious pages in the history of the Latin American peoples' struggle to achieve nationhood. I am the spokesperson of a country where, according to the design of the liberator, Simón Bolívar, the first congress of the new nations of the continent took place.

Here before the Assembly, I represent a State whose geographical location has given it an extraordinary role as a transit route, a country that has devoted itself heart and soul to the service of inter-oceanic transport and that, as a result, has had to wait until the end of the twentieth century to recover dominion over the whole of its territory.

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Along with my compatriots, I am filled with enthusiasm at the approach of the far-reaching event that is the handing over of the Panama Canal to Panamanian hands. On the eve of this tremendous event that arouses such great expectations, we must recognize the efforts of the many Panamanian men and women who, from the time we became an independent State, began the nationalist struggle to free ourselves from the burdens imposed on us by the first Canal Treaty, which was signed in 1903. Their patriotic deeds have been indelibly engraved in the history and the tradition of our people.

Since its opening in 1914, the Canal has been an important symbol of our nationhood and the centre of the hopes of the Panamanian people to attain its development as a nation. The Canal, which turned us into the world's bridge and the heart of the universe, has given impetus to the economic progress of the international community in the course of eight and a half decades. The Panamanian people will now be able to participate fully in the prosperity that the inter-oceanic waterway generates because, at the threshold of the twenty-first century, Panama has determined that the Canal will be operated not only to punctually serve international trade, but also to promote sustainable human development. The administration of the Canal is therefore not simply a right, but also a responsibility that obligates all Panamanians to administer the waterway responsibly, efficiently and with absolute probity. We have prepared ourselves for this with redoubled care.

The process for the legal transition of the Canal began in 1977 with the signing of the Panama Canal Treaty. That agreement recorded the commitment of the United States to transfer to Panama the administration and total control of the inter-oceanic waterway on 31 December 1999. Since then, the Governments of Panama and the United States of America have worked in harmony to bring about a seamless transition. Furthermore, and particularly since the 1989 restoration of constitutional rule, we Panamanians have agreed on the need to place the Canal above and beyond political differences. The fruit of this consensus was the fact that our political Constitution incorporates a provision for the Canal that stipulates how the waterway is to be administered from 31 December 1999. On the basis of that constitutional provision, adopted in 1994, and with the wide participation of society, we developed the Panama Canal Authority Act, which was adopted unanimously in the Legislative Assembly.

Those two legal instruments, the constitutional provision and the Act, provide the necessary legal mechanisms to ensure proper operation of the inter-oceanic waterway. In recent years, the Canal has handled unprecedented volumes of traffic and cargo and has dealt with them with exemplary care and efficiency, fundamentally thanks to our precious human resources, who are almost all of Panamanian nationality.

In order to guarantee its future operation, Panama is currently implementing an intensive programme of investment at an approximate cost of one billion balboas in order to modernize and improve the inter-oceanic waterway and to ensure that it is ready to cope with demand and to maintain the quality of its services. It is hoped that this modernization and improvement programme will augment the capacity of the Canal by 20 per cent.

One of the priorities of the Canal Authority is to protect the environment. As the Act establishes, as of 31 December 1999 the Authority will have the responsibility of vigilance over and conservation of the Canal basin, as well as for coordinating the administration, conservation and use of the natural resources of that immense region.

I should like to recognize the faultless way in which successive United States Governments have fulfilled the provisions of the Canal Treaty since it was signed in 1977. Thanks to them, it has been possible to overcome the obstacles that have been encountered over a long period of 20 years in the transfer of the inter-oceanic waterway and in the hand-over of the military bases that were established on our territory. Although there are several matters remaining for both Governments to confront, such as decontamination of certain areas designed for military use by the United States Army, my Government trusts that the differences that continue to exist on this point will be resolved satisfactorily in a reasonable period of time.

The handover of the Canal to the jurisdiction of the Republic of Panama is an event of far-reaching importance not only for Panama and the United States, but for the international community as well. Consequently, Panamanians hope that the representatives of the international community will join in celebrating the commemorative events associated with the transition. Panamanians also hope that from now on the relations between Panama and the United States will be based on mutual respect, cooperation and equity in trade, in view of the tremendously strong nature of the historical, social, political and trading bonds that have joined the two nations since the last century. The benefits that

control over the Canal have yielded for the economy and the political standing of the United States determine that that nation should value the feeling of brotherhood that its leaders have for decades professed and truly act on them in order to begin a new period of relations with Panama that will enable us to boost sustainable human development, which is something the Panamanian people very much aspire to.

In recent years, my country, like many others, has suffered the imposition of an economic orthodoxy applied more with an eye towards the interests of the major international economic sectors than to the true development of peoples, without any consideration being given to the values that underpin our nationhood. This is the real state of affairs that obliges my Government to review the orientation of our economic policy in order to promote the development of our people.

We are particularly concerned with the development of rural communities. These communities make an invaluable contribution to the strength of our nationhood, but they are also the ones that have the greatest difficulties in the struggle to ensure their survival. The fundamental concern of my Government is bound up with improving the quality of life of the neediest. That objective depends to a large extent upon our efforts, but it also depends on our succeeding in opening new markets for our products and achieving greater participation for private investment in our country and greater cooperation with developed nations.

At a time when the rights of women to equality and participation in the public life of nations are constantly being reaffirmed, I am proud to be the first Panamanian woman ever to receive from her people, in an unmistakeable manifestation of confidence, the mandate to serve the Republic as President. I interpret this mandate as a challenge calling on me to promote sustainable human development honestly and devotedly, in accordance with the universal political values that for half a century the Organization has been upholding with admirable persistence: the democratic system of government and respect for human rights.

Consequently, I bear the heavy responsibility in following in the steps of my predecessors — exceptional leaders elected in democratic elections, such as Golda Meir, Indira Ghandi and Corazón Aquino, among others; and, in the western hemisphere, Eugenia Charles, Violeta Chamorro and Janet Jagan. They helped to realize the warranted aspiration that society should recognize women's skills and merits to share on an equal footing in the great political responsibility of presiding over a nation.

For Panamanian women I represent a dream come true. In this respect, my election is a significant advance in the campaign to ensure political equality for the women of my country and the rest of the continent. However, many Panamanian women are being hard hit by poverty and destitution, an unacceptable situation that they share with children, older adults and men, whom so-called globalization takes no account of.

If we wish to secure the sustainability of human life on this God-given earth, and if we wish to keep our promises as leaders, we must strive to eradicate hunger, poverty and destitution, which in my country afflict almost two-fifths of the population.

If we wish to achieve these goals — which is what we were elected to do — we must root out corruption, which is the major obstacle standing in the way of achieving the lofty results that our societies expect of us. In this respect, I am pleased to assure the Assembly that Panama is doing everything in its power to put an end to the use and trafficking of drugs as well as to the money-laundering that is the result of that heinous phenomenon.

We the leaders of nations have the opportunity to undertake measures that will significantly help to fashion a more just, more humane and fairer world governed by the fundamental principles of democracy, justice and liberty, for which my people, together with all the peoples of the world, have fought throughout history.

I urge dignitaries and the representatives of Member States to embark resolutely on the struggle against poverty, destitution and corruption, which so adversely affect the living conditions of humankind. I would ask them to come with us to the rescue of the weak, of those who suffer unspeakable injustice and those whose way of life is threatened by invisible forces that they can neither understand nor control.

My presence here is evidence of the Panamanians' firm belief in the order provided by this Organization, whose struggle to achieve equality among peoples and peace among nations dates back more than 50 years. This Organization has wholeheartedly championed human rights and battled against discrimination on all fronts. That is why we believe in the need to strengthen it, because the United Nations is the court in which the

voice of smaller States can be heard, as well as the ultimate champion of all of our rights.

On account of the trust that my people have in the United Nations, I invite all of the dignitaries and representatives of Member States to join with us in celebrating the recovery of the sovereignty that we never resigned ourselves to losing. At this historic moment, which Panamanians wish to share with the whole of humankind, the bells of the world will ring out in jubilation because the principle of sovereignty, so often proclaimed in this and other international forums, will have been translated into reality in my country.

May God, the source of all authority, guide the deliberations of the Assembly.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Panama for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Mireya Moscoso, President of the Republic of Panama, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, President of the Dominican Republic

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, President of the Dominican Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Dominican Republic, His Excellency Mr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Reyna (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a particular honour for me to address the Assembly on behalf of the Government and people of the Dominican Republic and to take this opportunity to express my warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your recent election as President of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

I would also like to commend the excellent work of that outstanding representative of our region, the Foreign Minister of Uruguay, Mr. Didier Opertti, who so efficiently conducted the proceedings of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly.

Let me also wish Mr. Kofi Annan every success in the important and delicate tasks he is carrying out as Secretary-General of the United Nations.

This venerable institution, the United Nations, was founded more than half a century ago with the lofty goal of safeguarding peace among nations and the integrity of peoples. The United Nations has made a significant contribution to preventing armed conflict, reducing tension, resolving differences, promoting negotiation and agreements, and encouraging tolerance and non-violence.

But in a world that is becoming increasingly complex in the wake of an era marked by bipolar confrontation between two models of civilization, and with the rise of a technological revolution that has contributed to an accelerated sense of time, a reduction in distances and an increase in expectations, the United Nations must exercise renewed leadership in order to confront this new set of circumstances which, while they represent tremendous opportunities for the peoples of the world, may also threaten their future.

It is no longer just a matter of preventing war and conflict; that unavoidable task will always be expected of the Organization. The United Nations must ensure for every human being on this earth a dignified, hopeful and decent existence.

Never before has the world accumulated so much wealth. At no other time in history has humankind been able, as it is today, to produce everything it needs in the way of food, clothing, shelter, communications and transportation. The level of wealth that exists today is such that each and every day, more than a trillion dollars circulates in international capital markets for purely speculative purposes, producing what today is known as a "casino economy".

In order to give a rough idea of what that volume of capital means, I must point out that a single day of operations in the financial markets is equivalent to twice the annual gross national product of all the African countries. However, that wealth is concentrated in just a few countries that today are identified as central countries, and inside each of them wealth is concentrated in a few hands that control industry, finance, transportation and communications. The concentration of wealth in a few countries, and the influence that those

countries exert in the media, leads to the dissemination of a consumer philosophy that in turn contributes to the adoption of artificial lifestyles and behaviour patterns that are conducive to waste, luxury and ostentation.

Alongside all this wealth, however, the world has never suffered so much poverty. Today, 1.3 billion people live in extreme poverty, and most of them suffer from hunger every day. In such a wealthy world, 3 billion people survive on less than $2 a day, and each year 50 million children are permanently harmed because of malnutrition. Some 1.5 billion people have no access to drinking water, and more than 2 billion have no access to drainage or sewerage facilities. A large percentage have very limited access to education, health care and housing, and hundreds of millions are unemployed or have no secure or permanent income.

This stark and horrifying contrast between wealth and poverty constitutes a huge challenge for all the nations of the world and the United Nations system as we approach the twenty-first century. There are no magic formulas for resolving this situation. Only the concerted efforts of all nations, rich and poor, working to the same end in a spirit of solidarity and a sense of humanity will make it possible for the whole of humankind to share on a basis of equality and social justice in the prodigious and unprecedented creation of wealth in this era.

For some time, in various international forums, a set of balanced and reasonable ideas have been put forward, and if they were applied they would contribute to a significant reduction in poverty and to the creation of opportunities.

The world welcomed with great joy and satisfaction the decision adopted by the countries members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to use 0.7 of their gross national product to finance a programme aimed at halving by the year 2015 the percentage of the inhabitants of developing countries living in extreme poverty. Despite the public commitment made by those countries, cooperation for development fell to 0.22 of the combined product of the donor countries in 1997, which is the lowest figure since the 1950s.

It is unfair that while there is a daily transfer of over $1 trillion from the central or highly developed countries, there is a tendency to decrease official development assistance for the least developed countries.

The developing countries have watched their external debt climb from $1.6 trillion in 1993 to $2.5 trillion in 1998. The external debt of Latin America increased from $44.786 billion in 1980 to $669 billion in 1997 — an almost fifteen-fold increase in 17 years. Interest payments, which remained stable between 1980 and 1994 at a level between $24 billion and $28 billion, increased sharply, in 1997 reaching $42 billion.

The current proposal is to reduce the debt of only the heavily indebted poor countries. It seems to us that although this is a very significant first initiative, it is not sufficient because it excludes a group of countries, including the Dominican Republic, that have made significant efforts to achieve progress and peace, yet face a titanic struggle to overcome underdevelopment and poverty.

Forgiving external debt, or at least reducing it significantly, or eliminating the interest would be a just acknowledgement of those countries that, in spite of their internal difficulties, have adopted strict adjustment measures that have made it possible for them scrupulously to honour their international obligations. Forgiving external debt, or reducing it in any other way, would be a true gesture of international solidarity aimed at reducing poverty. Furthermore, the resources that would be freed as a result would greatly benefit the creditor countries and the international commercial banking community, since the purchasing power of poor nations would be increased, thereby generating a new dynamism in the world economy.

The so-called Asian crisis generated international turbulence, led to the Russian crisis and had a similar impact on the Brazilian economy, which in turn affected the Southern Cone economies. In analysing that crisis, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund agreed that it resulted from factors generated by the international flow of capital in the Asian stock markets. As a result of that situation, which has been identified as the first major crisis of the globalized economy, the economists of both institutions have proposed the creation of a new international financial architecture. That new architecture would seek to stabilize the financial markets through the adoption of a set of careful measures, both national and international, to prevent another financial crisis in the future.

These proposals would seem to be wise and beneficial. However, we believe that a true new international financial structure, as the focal point of a

global economy, should include the element of international solidarity and cooperation aimed at the introduction of measures to reduce poverty. We cannot understand why more than $1 trillion dollars circulates in international financial transactions every day while not a penny of those resources goes to the world's poor. All of Haiti's problems would be solved with only a single minute's worth of banking transactions on the international market. The same could be said of Nicaragua and of Honduras, and even of our own country, the Dominican Republic.

The eradication of poverty is not an illusory goal. With the wealth currently circulating world-wide, we could restore a sense of dignity to each and every human being. Determining how to achieve this is the big challenge facing this Organization in the twenty-first century.

To meet that challenge the United Nations itself has to go through a process of change and reform, beginning with acceptance that all its Member States are equal, with no differentiation between the powerful ones that possess the right of veto and the poor ones that have been marginalized in the very Organization that represents them. There is no doubt that we now have a unique opportunity to reform the Security Council. The Dominican Republic is convinced that reform of the Security Council must be carried out in keeping with the principles of equitable geographical distribution and the equal sovereignty of Member States, since no reform will be acceptable if it leads to discriminatory treatment of developing nations by developed nations.

It is in this spirit that the Dominican Republic aspires to election in the near future to a seat as a non-permanent member of the Council. Our country, although small in size, has a pacifist tradition that it would hope to channel into and combine with the basic principles that should guide the Security Council.

The Dominican Republic is proud to have introduced resolution 47/5, by which the Assembly proclaimed 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons. Now that the Year is drawing to a close, we are especially proud of its international success. In the Dominican Republic, thanks to the concerted efforts of the Government, in September 1998, our Congress approved a bill of rights for older persons and established a national committee to oversee its implementation. We consider this to have been our most important contribution the Year.

As host country to the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), we wish once again to stress the fundamental importance of the Institute, which is one of only three United Nations entities headquartered in a developing country, and the only one situated in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean. It is as important as it was in 1978, when it was created to promote the advancement of women, especially in our developing nations. We therefore appeal to all Governments to contribute to revitalizing the Institute so that it may continue its important work.

We are confident that this great Organization will renew itself and will act with the visionary leadership for which it was created for by its founders at the San Francisco Conference, in a world that expects greater solidarity among nations and a more just, equitable and humane international order.

I wish to conclude by calling on States Members of the United Nations to participate in and support the Millennium Assembly. We believe that that important assembly will reaffirm our commitment to the United Nations Charter, by highlighting the mission of the United Nations system in the twenty-first century in the light of the problems posed by globalization and of the need to ensure that that process will be of benefit to us all.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly I wish to thank the President of the Dominican Republic for his statement.

Mr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, President of the Dominican Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal, His Excellency Mr. Jacques Baudin.

Mr. Baudin (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): In electing you unanimously to preside over its at the fifty-fourth session, Sir, the General Assembly paid a well-deserved tribute to your country, the sister Republic of Namibia, which in November 1989, under the auspices of the United Nations Transition Assistance Group, organized that land's first free and fair elections, which marked the successful culmination of the legitimate, heroic struggle of the Namibian people for independence, under the

leadership of the South-West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) and its President, His Excellency Mr. Sam Nujoma. Now, following this happy sequence of events, we are now pleased to see Namibia at the helm of this historic session of the General Assembly, represented by you yourself. On behalf of the delegation of Senegal, Sir, I convey to you our warmest, fraternal congratulations; we wish you every success in your high post.

I wish also to convey my sincere and warm congratulations to your predecessor, Minister Didier Opertti, on the competent, committed and authoritative way in which he guided the work of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly.

Finally, I wish once again to offer Secretary-General Kofi Annan my encouragement as he continues, with energy, intelligence and vision, to carry out his delicate tasks authoritatively and successfully in a particularly difficult global context. I feel bound to say that his election to head the Secretariat of the United Nations was a source of pride for Africa and a source of satisfaction for all peace- and justice-loving countries. During the Secretary-General's visit to Senegal, Mr. Abdou Diouf, President of the Republic of Senegal, made it clear that the Senegalese Government was committed to and actively supported the Secretary-General.

I take genuine pleasure and great joy in welcoming among us the delegations representing the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga, which have just been admitted as full-fledged Members of the great United Nations family. These admissions attest to and bolster the universal character of our Organization, thus helping strengthen its aims and principles.

Allow me to use the idea of universality to explain and justify, if that is necessary, my country's unreserved support for the admission of the Republic of China, with its 22 million inhabitants, as a full Member of the United Nations and its specialized agencies. The Republic of China — a democratic country concerned with safeguarding and promoting human rights, a world economic Power recognized by nations, and, last but not least, a nation that maintains trade relations through commercial delegations — shares with deep conviction our common faith in the noble ideals of peace, solidarity and cooperation enshrined in the Charter. That country, for the sake of the principle of the universality of our Organization, should take its place once more. Simple justice requires this, and the ideals embodied in our Charter dictate it, because it is in the name of these principles that other States are admitted as Members of this Organization, which I welcome.

Our fifty-fourth regular session, we must all agree, is an event of great historical and political significance. Historical, because it is the penultimate session — or the last, depending on how you look at it — of the twentieth century, the century in which it was born, after two world wars and other great calamities for humankind, the consequences of which are still being felt.

This century has also been one of light, with tremendous advances achieved by the human race in various fields, particularly in science and technology. This session takes on special political importance because it is an irreplaceable tool in the service of peace, international security, cooperation and the promotion of human rights and is a timely opportunity for dialogue, reflection and preparation for the great encounters of the coming millennium.

At the threshold of the third millennium, we should wonder and think together, in the framework of this Organization, about what kind of peace, development and solidarity we should build in the coming century. It is a recognized fact that current changes, the range of whose effects in the political, economic and social spheres cannot be foreseen, call inevitably for a deep-going reform of the United Nations and impose a need to adapt the Organization to the demands of the times. Thus, we need to be clear-sighted, creative and realistic and make innovative, broad-ranging and constructive proposals that can be translated into concrete actions taken solely in the interests of all our peoples and all our nations, which make up the family that we call humankind.

In this respect, reform of the Security Council is a major test of our resolve to modernize this important body, which we need to endow with greater transparency, greater democracy, greater authority and greater legitimacy — in short, greater credibility.

Many proposals have already been made, but in restructuring this key organ of the system, we need to go beyond them, demonstrating creativity and a willingness to compromise, considering only the interests of this Organization at the service of humanity. From this standpoint, in the Algiers Declaration, the States of Africa unanimously recalled the legitimate demands embodied in the Harare Declaration adopted by the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

The pressing need to adapt the United Nations system to the realities of the coming century should, nonetheless, not obscure current acute needs associated with the maintenance and promotion of peace in the world. In this spirit, as the international community celebrates the 100th anniversary of the Hague Peace Conference, I wish to say how much we welcome certain significant advances towards peace in Africa.

We commend the Peace Agreement signed in Lomé on 7 July 1999, thanks to the tireless efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and President Eyadema, in the context of the Sierra Leone conflict. We also commend the Abuja Peace Agreement and the additional protocols in the context of the Guinea-Bissau conflict, thanks to the mediation of ECOWAS, under the chairmanship of Nigeria and Togo. Senegal strongly supports the Governments of Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau in their efforts to build peace, to move resolutely towards national reconciliation and to implement a policy of economic and social recovery in their countries. In the same spirit, the signing last 10 July, in Lusaka, of the Ceasefire Agreement among the principal parties to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is another cause for satisfaction and hope.

I would also like to touch on the Lockerbie affair in the hopes that the attitudes of the countries offer the possibility of a successful outcome.

Last, but not least, my country expresses the warmest hope that the referendum process under way in Western Sahara will be completed as early as possible in accordance with the letter and spirit of the United Nations settlement plan adopted in 1991, as well as that of the Houston agreements, with full respect for the inalienable rights of all inhabitants of Western Sahara to participate in the referendum. Allow me — and I think this is the right place to do so — to pay humble tribute to the memory of King Hassan II.

Finally, we hope that with the assistance of the great Powers and the cooperation of Indonesia, the situation in East Timor will be brought under control by the United Nations in order to ensure that the legitimate rights of the Timorese people prevail.

These significant breakthroughs should not make us overlook the situations in Angola and Somalia, or the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, where, in spite of the praiseworthy efforts of the OAU, there has been no serious sign of a final settlement. We must therefore continue our efforts because our only salvation lies in peace and in reconciliation.

In this sense, the evolution we have witnessed in the Middle East gives us grounds for hope, the hope of finally seeing a climate of complete trust and confidence and a sincere resumption of negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians and between Israel and the Arab countries, with the rights of the peoples of the region respected. My country, having presided over the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People ever since its creation, reaffirms its support for and solidarity with the fraternal people of Palestine, the Palestinian Authority and its head, President Yasser Arafat, which have been struggling now for more than half a century for the creation of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State.

We solemnly reaffirm our support for the Bethlehem 2000 project which has the objective of celebrating in Bethlehem, on Palestinian soil, the second millennium since the birth of Christ.

Furthermore, the Israeli Government seems now to want to work resolutely for peace. We urge it to continue on this path. It is the only approach that responds to the situation of the peoples of the subregion and to the hardships connected to the constraints imposed by globalization.

Before concluding the subject of peace and security, I would like to state that my country supports any move to protect, safeguard and promote the rights of women and children. Its legal code has been modified to translate that choice and those convictions into its own domestic law.

I should like now to deal with the other dimension of peace: development cooperation. The United Nations, responding once again to its mission to serve the peoples of the world, has, during the major conferences of the decade, provided a framework for the definition of a coherent set of programmes based on consensus. These programmes continue to inspire our common efforts towards sustainable development.

But a careful review of the realities of this century now coming to a close lead us to note that our achievements have been seriously undermined by the contradictory tendencies that are a hallmark of humanity as it enters the third millennium. The lack of sufficient sustained growth in the world as a whole means that the

global economy is facing great risks in the years to come. Indeed, because of a lack of sufficient growth, trade tensions are threatening to increase between underdeveloped countries and around them, and thus the lag in development can only increase, increasing the mob of uncontrolled emigration.

In addition, the gap that has been emerging over many years is becoming increasingly clear. On the one hand we see a small number of regions enjoying a high standard of living or rapid development. In these countries the volume of trade, of interdependence and competition is increasing. On the other hand, there is a group of countries — more numerous and more populous — in which the standards of living are poor and stagnating. They are for the most part not involved in this ever-tighter network of commercial, financial and industrial exchanges. It is difficult for them to find markets for their products, they suffer from capital flight, and businesses avoid setting up in these countries.

However, over the last four years, the gross national product of Africa has grown at an annual average rate of 4.5 per cent, resulting in a year-on-year increase in per capita incomes. This is particularly remarkable because the progress is attributable, above all, to internal adjustment efforts rather than to external phenomena. Nevertheless, despite this macroeconomic performance, most African countries do not possess the basic means for ensuring sustainable growth in a future of a kind that would enable them to achieve their poverty-reduction objectives in keeping with the medium-term goals set at the World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen, because the required rate of growth is in the order of 8 per cent per year.

While it is true that the slow pace of integration of African economies into the global economy has protected most of these economies from the most violent shocks of recent financial crises, the other side of the coin is that Africa is not in a position to take full advantage of globalization, which could increase the resources available for productive investment. However, the developing countries will not and cannot escape the effects of globalization. We would therefore like to stress here — in particular to our African partners in various initiatives such as the second Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD II), the United States/Africa forum and the negotiations between the European Union and Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific — the need to encourage the efforts that have been undertaken, particularly in the elimination of the rigidities and imbalances that persist in the global economy.

In this regard, it might be worthwhile to reaffirm the commitment that joins the developing and the developed countries within the World Trade Organization and involves recognition of the need to make significant efforts so that the developing countries — the least-developed in particular — are assured of a share in the growth in world trade in keeping with their development needs.

But also, an examination of the way the principles of the multilateral trade system created at the Uruguay Round have been implemented reveals that commitments have not been honoured: many obstacles impede access by products from the South in general, and from African countries in particular, to Northern markets. Tariff barriers, sliding-scale increases in duty rates, anti-dumping measures and animal and plant hygiene measures all represent acts and attitudes that impede trade and that affect our exports — and, thus, our trade surpluses. That is why we venture to hope that the Seattle Round in November this year will take into greater account not only the concerns of the developing countries positions by removing obstacles to their complete participation in world trade on the basis of the principles of justice and equity — particularly by working to reduce and eliminate the restrictive and distorting effects that the aforementioned barriers, laws and measures have on trade — but will also take into consideration social rights and sustainable development as inalienable elements in all world trade.

Given the significant efforts by the African countries to achieve their recent economic performance levels, it will be a Herculean task in terms of resources for them to achieve and maintain 8 per cent annual growth in their gross domestic product, in order to reduce poverty. We should like to take this opportunity to welcome the new international climate for finding a solution to the African debt crisis, particularly given that the total of this debt — estimated at $350 billion in 1998 — represents 300 per cent of Africa's export earnings.

To this end, the proposals by a some G-8 countries, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and other organs of the United Nations, as well as the recent studies by the Bretton Woods institutions, are signs of a new realism, i.e., that most of the debt cannot be repaid, that the debt is a major obstacle to balanced growth in African countries, and that the current machinery for debt settlement, in particular the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt (HIPC) Initiative, is too slow, too selective and imposes too

many conditions. The principal members of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) must accept the idea, among others, of increasing the resources for the HIPC significantly by selling gold reserves.

Furthermore, despite the pressures within the donor community to reduce aid volumes, the economic performance of Africa and the continent's commitment to structural reform can be maintained only on the basis of expansion, not contraction: increased development assistance is essential if we are to achieve the fundamental objectives of development.

Finally, despite the praiseworthy efforts of our various countries to implement economic and financial reforms, inflows of direct foreign investment remain marginal.

In highlighting these major factors in the current global economic situation, I am far from wishing to shirk an enduring truth: sustainable development is the individual responsibility of each State. The need for the international community to find a more global and more judicious solution to the debt problem in no way detracts from the need for African countries to manage their economies better.

This attitude towards debt will be put into practice by the definition and implementation of a high-quality macroeconomic framework; by a significant intensification of efforts towards national thrift to accompany international financing; and by respect for the state of law, transparency, control and responsibility in the management of public affairs. Thanks to the guidance and choices of Mr. Abdou Diouf, President of the Republic, my country subscribes to these fundamental principles, on which the policy of the Government of Senegal is based.

I have particularly stressed questions of peace and development because we live on a continent where peace is threatened every day by underdevelopment and where development efforts are made precarious by the absence of peace. It is therefore important that efforts to consolidate peace in Africa be accompanied by extraordinary efforts to increase the quality and quantity of development assistance in order significantly to reduce our debt and increase the flow of productive investment to our continent and to establish, if not a Marshall Plan for Africa, at least a plan for financing its development.

My delegation fervently hopes that, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, the opportunity will be found to revive international cooperation for development in order to build a more humane world. I am convinced that we have the means and the intelligence; we must also summon the political determination to do so. Thus, in order to improve interaction, Africa for its part has agreed to promote economic integration and to go one step further by creating a union of African States. This was the sense of the Syrte Declaration adopted on 9 September 1999 at the Fourth Extraordinary Summit of heads of State of the Organization of African Unity, convened on the happy initiative of Mr. Al-Qadhafi.

I am convinced that the wealthy nations are clearly aware of their various and diverse responsibilities and that they will not shirk their obligations. Indeed, should they do so, God forbid, the eternal night of hideous poverty will blanket almost the entire world. I express the genuine hope, willingly undertaken and profoundly shared by all nations, that we cannot remain indifferent to anything that is human. I am therefore convinced that, together, we can save humanity.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, His Excellency Mr. Kamal Kharrazi.

Mr. Kharrazi (*spoke in Persian; interpretation furnished by the delegation*): I wish to extend to you, Sir, my sincere congratulations on your well-deserved election to the presidency of the General Assembly and to assure you of the full support and cooperation of the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the discharge of your responsibilities. I should also like to thank your predecessor for his tireless efforts during his tenure.

May I also express the profound gratitude of my Government to our Secretary-General, who, with unsurpassed wisdom and sagacity, has played an immense role in advancing the objectives of the United Nations.

The twentieth century we are leaving behind has been one of invaluable experiences, both positive and negative. On the positive side, the rejection of force as an instrument of policy has emerged as a fundamental principle of international behaviour; the promotion and protection of human rights as universal concepts have attained priority on the global agenda; astonishing progress in science and technology has brought unprecedented welfare to humanity; knowledge has become the common heritage of humanity; previously colonized countries have been empowered to determine their own destiny; dictatorship and despotism have been seriously challenged by the universal demand for

participation; and the technological revolution in the field of communications has fundamentally changed human interaction.

Alongside these positive developments, the twentieth century has also witnessed various negative phenomena and trends. The totalitarian mentality continues to prevail at the domestic and international levels; poverty persists in its material, spiritual and cultural manifestations; the gap between rich and poor has widened; the world has never freed itself from conflict and bloodshed; the destructive territorial wars of the past have turned into tragic ethnic, racial and sectarian rivalries; extremism survives in its various forms and manifestations, causing irreparable damage; and terrorism continues to challenge humanity with its ruthless recurrence in various parts of the world.

A hallmark of the twentieth century has been the worldwide emergence of demands for individual and collective participation, defying totalitarianism and authoritarian rule everywhere. Decision-making is no longer an autocratic or even elitist enterprise. It is a participatory process demanding collective contribution. Totalitarian tendencies and ideologies in various countries and at the international level are finally learning that their time is long passed.

The global surge of democracy and popular participation as the sole guarantors of stability and the litmus tests of good-governance is indeed a development of historic proportions. Self-determination, collective participation and consent of the governed represent valuable and time-tested rational alternatives.

In this century, Iran has undergone fundamental changes in the pursuit of independence, liberty, justice, participation and good governance. Since time immemorial and throughout its tumultuous history, Iran has been the locus of innovation. It has proudly preserved its genuine national and religious heritage, and yet, in keeping with the best traditions of that very culture, it has never failed to embrace modernity, new ideas and new ways.

In today's Islamic Republic, the democratization process is marching forward on the solid foundation of democratic Islamic principles. The Government is resolutely determined vigorously to pursue the implementation and consolidation of its reform programmes. The cornerstones of these reform policies are the promotion and protection of constitutional liberties; upholding the rule of law; strengthening democratic norms and institutions; the institutionalization of the culture of participation; the enhancement of the role of people in government; the full accountability of public officials; increasing transparency; strengthening the institutions of civil society; the promotion of tolerance, a pluralistic society of multiple voices and domestic trends, coupled with confidence-building and the breaking of old barriers in foreign relations.

Undoubtedly, open, dynamic and democratic societies are by definition susceptible to dissension and even rivalries. This has historically accompanied the process of reform, constituting an inescapable ingredient of this path. The sound and successful approach of President Khatami's Administration in dealing with these social and political challenges, which has enjoyed the full support of the leadership, has been to promote and protect fundamental democratic values and ensure the rule of law and due process, as well as security and stability, which together form the foundations of a flourishing and open society.

Collective participation extends beyond local and domestic decision-making, and is becoming increasingly a global requirement for an effective presence in international decision-making. The full participation of all States is a necessary but not sufficient response to this need. It requires the effective contribution of civil society organizations in all aspects of the global decision-making process.

During this century, exclusion often surfaced as a paradigm of global interaction, in which the world is viewed in terms of modes of loyalty, countries are viewed as belonging to coalitions or not and are divided, rewarded and blamed accordingly. Today, the utility of this paradigm is being seriously questioned, as is the validity of some of our basic assumptions.

The cold war was the last episode of exclusion. It has undoubtedly left its negative imprint on international affairs, but more regrettably it has permanently scarred the mentality of global actors and international relations theory.

One of the most horrifying manifestations of exclusion has been the global arms race. It literally aims at marginalizing others through the accumulation of conventional and mass-destruction agents of death, the formation of rival military blocs and the unbridled race to expand spheres of influence and domination.

The persistence of this paradigm is largely responsible for the most serious threat to the Middle East region. Exploiting this mode of global interaction, Israel, with impunity, has trampled the most fundamental rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination, has driven millions of people into diaspora, has illegally occupied territories of others in the Syrian Golan and southern Lebanon and has even gone as far as to commit extortion for partial fulfilment of its obligations. This has impeded the realization of the legitimate right of the Palestinian people, and indeed the entire Islamic world, to establish an independent Palestinian State in the occupied territories, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. The same regime has posed a grave threat to regional and global peace and security through the acquisition of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and the rejection of universal non-proliferation regimes.

The global culture of violence and exclusion, which partially emanated from justification of violence as an acceptable means to achieve coalition objectives, has unwittingly nurtured global menaces ranging from ethnic suppression to terrorism.

Two decades of fratricide and devastation in Afghanistan has been the fruit of an illusion of total domination of one group or ethnicity at the expense of the exclusion of others. This has stalled the constructive and tireless efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, Ambassador Brahimi, to bring about a peaceful solution through the establishment of a broad-based Government. Thus, today peace and stability in Afghanistan and respect for the most fundamental rights of Afghan women, men and children in Taliban-controlled areas have all but become distant dreams, turning Afghanistan, with its proud and rich heritage, into a bastion of narcotics, terrorism and regional instability.

Allow me to refer to terrorism, which has become a serious menace and a global challenge. It, of course, victimizes innocent human beings. But its real targets are the rule of law, popular participation and institutions of civil society. In fact, to have fertile ground, terrorists need and seek to cultivate and entrench a culture of violence. It is for this very reason that, as the Iranian people and Government have forged a national consensus to institutionalize the rule of law and participation, known terrorist groups have significantly intensified their campaign of terror against them. It is even more regrettable that they still find foreign benefactors and sanctuaries. The people and the Government of Iran have no doubt that the aim of this treacherous terrorist campaign is to undermine the national determination to reject violence in all its forms, and we are all determined to prove the terrorists wrong.

Terrorism can and will be contained and eradicated if we all join hands with firm and resolute determination. But we need to recognize that the application of double standards seriously undermines such a global campaign. Acquiescence to terrorists of whatever stripe impedes the emergence of a unified, transparent and non-discriminatory universal machinery to combat and root out all forms of terrorism. Iran, while condemning terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, is fully prepared to engage actively in such global cooperation.

It is thus necessary to work collectively today to lay the foundations of a new paradigm of inclusion and dialogue on participation, tolerance, understanding and collective cooperation. The initiative of a dialogue among civilizations, presented last year by President Khatami, is a proposal to move away from a world driven by exclusion and monologue and to begin the new millennium with a gentler, more civilized approach for a better tomorrow. The overwhelming reception by the international community and the designation of the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations indicate a common longing of humanity for a different approach to interactions in the next century.

In our view, the designation of the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations is not a mere recognition of the self-evident necessity for dialogue at the global level. It is in fact a declaration of readiness to try a new model of interaction. The fundamental assumption of this proposal is that the prosperity, welfare, development and security of one group, in spite of, or at the expense of, the poverty, hunger, underdevelopment and insecurity of others are simply deceptive and short-lived, and thus they need to be abandoned. In certain fields, this underlying principle has been universally accepted, whereas in many other fields, we have a long and arduous way to go.

Today, no one has the illusion that the environment could be defined in terms of political or geographic boundaries. Neither can the eradication of narcotics be a purely national enterprise. We in Iran are particularly cognizant of that fact, as we have had to endure a heavy human, social and financial toll in our campaign against international narcotics traffickers.

In the field of human rights, it appears that the international community is gradually embracing a more

cooperative approach based on constructive engagement and understanding. Pluralism, acceptance of diversity and dialogue among cultures and civilizations in this pivotal area of international affairs will undoubtedly enhance the universality of human rights instruments, making them more readily acceptable and globally implementable.

Dialogue is the product of concurrent acceptance of commonality and diversity. From this perspective, international endorsement of dialogue illustrates recognition of the diversity of cultures and civilizations and the reaffirmation of the cultural rights of all peoples and nations, so that all human beings can engage members of other civilizations from the standpoint of their own culture, civilization and historical background, and not by simply echoing the mentality of a totally alien culture. Only such interaction can be mutually enriching and indeed meaningful. The Islamic Republic of Iran firmly believes that the recognition and reaffirmation of cultural rights of nations is a first step for the promotion of sustained dialogue.

In the field of peace and security, we need to truly accept the reality that security is an indivisible need and demand of the entire human race. Thus we need to set aside the residuals of the bipolar system and replace bloc security umbrellas with a new and innovative concept of global security networking, an inclusive and participatory system which uses the existing mechanisms in a complementary rather than competing scheme.

Attainment of this objective can be immensely helped and expedited by empowering civil society organizations to participate actively in global disarmament and security forums and debates. This valuable role has hitherto been mostly limited to the social and human rights fields, and the security and disarmament arena has been more or less deprived of its contribution and insight. This deficiency needs to be rectified.

Meanwhile, short- and medium-term measures include confidence-building at the regional and global levels, transparency in the field of armaments, a steady reduction of military expenditures, the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in the interim. The Islamic Republic of Iran has itself adopted these measures, and has based its foreign policy on confidence-building and the removal of old barriers, with particular emphasis on its immediate neighbourhood.

As the Chairman of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, we have also made significant progress in developing mechanisms and instruments to enhance confidence among Member States and to institutionalize dialogue and coordination with other bodies, such as the European Union.

The United Nations has an indispensable pivotal role in shaping the new world of the next millennium. The preservation and extension of its achievements, coupled with revitalization of the moral authority and political relevance of the United Nations in the coming millennium, require restoration of the fundamental purposes and principles of the United Nations, as well as a rational, transparent and participatory process of reassessment of the existing institutions.

Enhancement of the relevance of the United Nations requires, first and foremost, strengthening the role and increasing the efficiency of the General Assembly, by focusing its deliberations on contemporary challenges and problems facing our world today, engaging it in timely and effective decision-making to address global economic and political issues, and enabling it to seriously examine and effectively react to the reports of other organs of the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, as mandated by the Charter. In this context, we believe that the General Assembly, as the sole democratic, universal and transparent organ of the United Nations, is the proper forum to carry out an in-depth analysis of the implications of the emerging debate on collective action to address humanitarian catastrophes. The imperative of maintaining the integrity of the Charter system is the common point of departure in this exercise.

I firmly believe that the success of next year's Millennium Summit rests on an innovative approach to prepare the United Nations system to march — and indeed to lead the world community — towards a new paradigm of international affairs. Outdated approaches and old remedies have failed to rectify the main problems afflicting humanity, even at times exacerbating and aggravating them. In our collective quest for fundamental solutions, we all need to discard old perceptions, assumptions and conceptual frameworks. This is the very premise, as well as the primary goal, of dialogue between civilizations.

Vital change in human societies requires brave and bold leadership by statesmen and the elite to question old, ineffective ways and open the arena for the participation of thinkers, intellectuals and civil society organizations in the search for a kinder and gentler tomorrow. We hope that our Assembly will have such bravery and foresight.

The President: I nex: call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, His Excellency Mr. Felipe Pérez Roque.

Mr. Pérez Roque (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): In this Hall today are representatives of wealthy countries and also representatives of poor countries, who constitute the majority. There are ministers and ambassadors from countries whose per capita gross domestic product is $25,000 dollars, and others who represent countries where that figure is a mere $300 dollars. Moreover, that difference grows year by year.

There are representatives of countries that appear to have a promising future. These are the countries with only 20 per cent of the world's population, but 86 per cent of its gross domestic product, 82 per cent of world export markets, 68 per cent of direct foreign investment, and 74 per cent of all of the telephone lines on the planet.

What can we say about the future of those whom we represent here who account for 80 per cent of the world's population, living in countries that were colonized and plundered for centuries to increase the wealth of the former metropolises? It is true that time has passed, and that our history is what it is and not what we might have wished it to be. But must we simply resign ourselves to a future that is essentially the same?

Can we feel reassured knowing that the wealth of the three richest people in the world is greater than the combined gross domestic product of the 48 least developed countries, with their population of 600 million, whose representatives are present in this hall today demanding justice?

In this hall today we have representatives of countries where most of the population — which is hardly growing at all — are guaranteed decent living standards and where some live in opulence. These populations spend $12 billion on perfume and $17 billion on pet food every year.

But there is a majority represented in this hall that has no reason to feel optimistic. This majority comprises 900 million people who go hungry and 1.3 billion who live in poverty. My brothers and sisters here today representing Africa have no reason to feel reassured. They know that today there are 23 million people on their continent who are HIV-positive. They also know that it costs $12,000 to treat just one person infected with the virus, which means that it would take almost $300 billion a year for all the AIDS patients in Africa to receive the same treatment currently provided to AIDS sufferers in wealthy countries.

Could my colleagues representing 6 billion of the planet's inhabitants — to which a further 80 million are added every year, almost all of them in the Third World — really think that a situation like this could continue unchanged into the next century?

How can any of us prevent the continued growth in the number of emigrants from poor nations who flock to the wealthy countries in pursuit of a dream, while the current world order does not allow them to find the conditions for a decent life in their own countries?

A small number of representatives in this hall represent countries that have no need to fear a military threat in the coming century. Some even have nuclear weapons, belong to a powerful alliance or build up their armies every year with better, more sophisticated weapons. They are the ones who view the rest of the world as merely the Euro-Atlantic periphery of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and therefore they will never have to endure the devastation of massive bombings by invisible attackers acting under what has come to be known as a new strategic concept of that aggressive military organization.

But the vast majority of those of us gathered here today do not enjoy such security. We are troubled to see that in a world dominated by a single military and technological Power, we are today less safe than during the difficult years of the cold war.

If one day we wished to call upon the Security Council to discuss a situation that we viewed as a threat to one of our poor countries, does the Assembly think that we would be heard? I fear that recent examples have proved otherwise.

Why is there no discussion in the Assembly about general and complete disarmament, including nuclear disarmament? Why is the issue limited to controlling small arms, which are necessary in a case such as that of Cuba — a country attacked and under blockade for 40 years? Why is there no mention of the deadly laser-guided bombs, the depleted uranium missiles, or the cluster or graphite bombs used indiscriminately by the United States in bombing the civilian populations in Kosovo?

Could anyone claim that our children will inherit a just and secure world if we do not change the unfair and unequal standards that are currently used to measure issues of such key importance to our collective security?

Must we also accept the imposition of free market rules and the sacred law of supply and demand in the brutal commerce of death? What is stopping the international community from attempting, in a rational and coordinated manner, to redirect a large part of the $780 billion currently used for military expenditures to promoting development in the Third World countries?

That is why we so passionately defend respect for the principles of international law, which have guided relations among all of the world's countries for more than half a century. What would we have left to defend ourselves in the future if we poor countries were no longer able to rely on such principles as respect for sovereignty and self-determination, the sovereign equality of all States and non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations? How could we call on the international community to protest a threat against one of our countries if those principles, which are today systematically and flagrantly violated, were to be struck from the Charter of the United Nations?

In a unipolar world, attempts to impose notions such as the limitation of sovereignty, and humanitarian intervention, do not advance international security: they pose a threat to the countries of the Third World, which have neither powerful armies nor nuclear weapons. Such attempts must therefore be brought to an end: they violate the letter and the spirit of the Charter.

At the same time, we believe it is necessary to defend the United Nations, now more than ever. We defend the need for its existence as much as we do the need to democratize it. The challenge facing us is that of reforming the United Nations so that it serves the interests of all nations equally. We defend both the need for the existence of the Security Council and the need to make it more inclusive, democratic and transparent. Why not expand the number of permanent members? Why could not the Council include at least two or three new permanent members from Latin America, Africa and Asia? The membership now is three times the number of countries which founded the United Nations in San Francisco in 1945, and the vast majority of them — the Third World countries — do not have a single permanent member to represent them.

However, we do not defend the right of veto. We do not believe that anyone should have it. But if it is not possible to eliminate it, we should at least attempt to ensure that this prerogative is more evenly shared, and provide that all new permanent members have the right of veto. Why, if the right of veto cannot be eliminated now, is it not restricted to votes on proposed measures under Chapter VII of the Charter? As things stand at present, a single country can override the will of all the other United Nations Members. And there is one country that has exercised its unlimited right to veto an infinite number of times: the United States. This is untenable.

At the United Nations, we must curb the attempt to impose a single way of thinking on us by trying to make us believe that it is our way, or that it is superior to our rich diversity of cultures and models, or that it is more advanced and modern than our multiplicity of identities. To survive, we must resist being treated as merely the Euro-Atlantic periphery and oppose having labelled as global threats the problems that we face as consequences of colonialism: underdevelopment; the consumerism of the wealthy countries; and even the results of their recent or current policies.

Here in this Hall are the representatives of the Group of 7, whose countries have 685 million inhabitants and economies with a combined gross domestic product of $20 trillion. Also present are the rest of us, who represent the remaining 181 countries, with more than 5 billion inhabitants and economies with a combined gross domestic product of barely $10 trillion. Yes, we are all equal under the Charter of the United Nations, but not in real life.

While rich countries have the transnational corporations that control over one third of all of the world's exports, we poor countries have the asphyxiating burden of external debt, which has risen to the level of $2 trillion and continues to grow, devouring almost 25 per cent of our export earnings just to service our debt. How can development be possible under these conditions? While we speak insistently in this Hall of the need for a new international financial architecture, our countries are being buffeted by the scourge of a system that allows the daily occurrence of speculative transactions worth $3 trillion. That structure cannot be fixed; it is not a matter of remodelling it, but rather of demolishing it and rebuilding it anew.

Can anyone explain the logic of this phantom economy that produces nothing and is sustained by buying and selling things that do not exist? Should we or should we not demolish this chaotic financial system and build upon its ruins a system that favours production, takes differences into account and stops forcing our battered economies to endlessly pursue the impossible illusion of increasing financial reserves? Sooner or later,

those reserves evaporate in the course of the desperate and unfair battle to defend our currencies from the strong and highly favoured currency of the anachronistic Bretton Woods accord, the sacrosanct dollar.

When the history of these years is written, it will be very difficult to explain how a single country was able to accumulate so many privileges and such absolute power. What will the economists of the next century say when they realize that the United States was able to live with a current account deficit that is already about $300 billion without the International Monetary Fund (IMF) having imposed even one of the severe adjustment programmes that are impoverishing the countries of the third world?

Who will explain the fact that, thanks to the privilege of having the world's reserve currency, the Americans, save less and spend more than anyone else in the world? Will anyone tell them that in 1998 they were able to import $124 billion worth of cars and spend $8 billion in cosmetics, thanks in good measure to the fact that they controlled 17.8 per cent of the votes of the International Monetary Fund, which gives them a virtual right of veto?

How can we explain to the people of Tanzania, for example, that while all of this was happening they had to spend nine times as much on servicing the foreign debt than on primary health care, and four times as much as on primary education?

The current international economic system is not only profoundly unjust, but also absolutely unsustainable. An economic system that destroys the environment cannot be sustained. The world's supply of drinking water today is 60 per cent of what it was in 1970; and today there are 2.3 billion more human beings on the planet than there were back then. The same is happening with our forests. Could anyone in this Hall defend the proposition that such a pace of destruction can go on indefinitely?

An economic system based on the irrational consumption patterns of the rich countries, which are later exported to our own countries through the mass media, cannot be sustained. Why not accept that it is possible to provide a decent life to all the people of the planet with the resources that are within our reach and the degree of technological development we have achieved, through a rational and solidarity-based exploitation of all this potential?

How will they explain that the member countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, whose representatives I now address with all due respect, have fallen so far behind as to provide less than one third of their 1970 commitment to dedicate a minimum of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to official development assistance?

I asked a member of our delegation, a Deputy in our National Assembly and a professed Christian, what the Bible would say about such an unjust economic order. He responded quickly with the words of a Prophet from the Holy Book:

> "Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed;
>
> To turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless!
>
> And what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from afar? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave your glory?" *(The Holy Bible, Isaiah 10: 1-3)*

I know that many people in this Hall share these concerns, and I also know that almost all of us are asking ourselves the same question. Can the World Trade Organization (WTO) be spared from becoming a fiefdom of the United States and its allies, as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are today? Will we truly succeed in making the World Trade Organization the democratic and transparent forum we need, or will the powerful interests of a minority be imposed to the detriment of the silent majority, which is too divided, confused and unsuspecting to understand the dangers of a cold and dogmatic liberalization of world trade? Will they remember that the vast majority of third world countries, dependent on the export of a single agricultural product or a few spices, will be wiped out of world trade and crushed by the fierce competition of a few transnational corporations? Should we or should we not take these realities into account and accept the need to protect the interests of the underdeveloped countries, if only to guarantee their very survival?

How will we poor countries be able to compete if our professionals leave for the wealthy nations in pursuit of better opportunities; if we are not even allowed to keep our athletes and we must watch with sorrow as they compete under another country's flag? How will we poor

nations be able to compete economically if the 10 most developed countries control 95 per cent of the patents issued in the last 20 years, and intellectual property, far from being liberalized, is ever more closely protected?

Talking to us poor countries about trade through the Internet is almost a joke, when we know that 91 per cent of Internet users live in the member countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. Will we ever see a change in the current situation, in which there are over 600 telephone lines for every 1,000 people in the United States, Sweden and Switzerland, yet only 1 telephone per 1,000 people in Cambodia, Chad and Afghanistan?

As part of this tragic depiction of the situation facing the vast majority of countries in the world, I feel bound to talk about my own country. The situation in Cuba is an eloquent example, if ever there was one, of what should not be done in terms of relations between powerful and small nations.

For more than 40 years, my people have been subjected to a brutal policy of hostility and all kinds of aggression imposed by the United States. High-level authorities in that country have openly admitted that this policy is aimed at destroying the political and economic system built by the Cuban people of their own free will and at restoring the neo-colonial power that the United States held over Cuba and definitively lost on 1 January 1959, with the triumph of the Cuban revolution.

As has been made clear by events, public statements by American spokespersons and by declassified secret United States documents, this policy of aggression has been carried out through means that have ranged from political and diplomatic measures, propaganda campaigns, espionage and subversion, and fostering defection and illegal emigration, to acts of terrorism, sabotage and biological warfare. This policy has also included the organization and support of armed groups; air and naval raids against our territory; the hatching of over 600 plots to assassinate the leader of our revolution; a military invasion by a mercenary army; the most serious threat ever of a global nuclear conflict, in October 1962; and finally, a brutal commercial and financial blockade and a ferocious economic war against my country that have now lasted 40 years.

Let me set aside the economic aspects of this aggression against Cuba and deal solely with the physical aggression and acts of war carried out by the United States Government. Recently Cuban social organizations, on behalf of the entire population of Cuba, filed a civil lawsuit against the United States Administration claiming reparation and compensation for loss and damages resulting from the deaths of 3,478 Cuban citizens and for a further 2,099 survivors who have been left disabled as a consequence of the covert plots and the "dirty war" waged by the United States. The suit demands that the United States Government, which is responsible for these human losses and injuries, be sentenced to pay a total of $181.1 billion in reparation as a minimum symbolic compensation for the loss of something that is clearly irreplaceable and priceless: the lives and physical well-being of the more than 5,500 Cuban citizens who have been victims of the United States' obsessive policy against Cuba.

At the open and public trial, televised nationwide, at which this claim was considered, it was clearly proved that the United States Government was directly responsible for this continued aggression, and that the undeclared war against Cuba had constituted an official State policy enforced by no fewer than nine successive United States Administrations over the last 40 years.

What will they tell their grandchildren, these leaders, officials and agents of the United States Government whose consciences are weighed down by the guilt of planning and carrying out this "dirty war" against Cuba and by the moral burden of responsibility for the death of thousands of Cubans?

Can we possibly allow an international system to continue into the next century that accords total impunity for monstrous actions such as these, which have been systematically and flagrantly perpetrated by a major Power?

The ferocious economic blockade that extends to every facet of our country's foreign trade and financial relations merits particular attention. This blockade, which has lasted over 40 years, began to develop before the triumph of the revolution. A secret United States document, declassified in 1991, reveals that on 23 December 1958, at a National Security Council meeting attended by President Dwight Eisenhower at which the situation in Cuba was discussed, the then-Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Allen Dulles, categorically stated: "We must prevent a Castro victory".

Three days later, on 26 December, President Eisenhower instructed the CIA that he did not wish the

specifics of covert operations against Cuba to be presented to the National Security Council. Everything had to be kept strictly secret.

The sudden and overwhelming triumph of the revolutionary forces six days later did not give them time to prevent a Castro victory. The first United States assault on the national economy took place on 1 January 1959, when those who had looted the public treasury fled for the United States, together with the perpetrators of the worst massacres and abuses against the Cuban people.

Five weeks after the triumph of the revolution, economist Felipe Pazos, a professional man — well known and respected in United States Government circles — who had been appointed by the revolutionary Government to take over the management of the Cuban National Bank, announced on 6 February that the former regime had embezzled or seized $424 million from the gold and dollar reserves that backed the Cuban peso. *The New York Times* subsequently corroborated the report's claim concerning the theft of the funds, which constituted the country's only reserves.

The spoils of this colossal theft ended up in United States banks. Not a dime was returned to Cuba. The National Bank immediately requested a modest quantity of funds to deal with this highly critical situation. That request was turned down.

The Agrarian Reform Act, enacted on 17 May 1959, was aimed at providing food for the vast majority of our undernourished people and direct or indirect employment for the large percentage of the population that was then unemployed. It was enacted when the word socialism had not yet been spoken in Cuba; however, it provoked an extreme reaction in the United States, whose companies owned much of the best and most fertile land in Cuba. Cuba's willingness, stipulated in the Act itself, to provide the owners with deferred compensation paid out in reasonable and workable instalments was met with an immediate demand from the United States Government for prompt, effective and full cash compensation. There was nothing in the public coffers with which to meet this demand.

A month later, on 24 June, at a meeting called by the State Department to consider options for action against Cuba, the view was put forth that the United States should take a very strong stance forthwith against the Act and its implementation, and that the best way to achieve the necessary results was through economic pressure. The elimination of the Cuban sugar cane quota from the United States market was proposed. According to a declassified document, this would cause the sugar industry to suffer an abrupt and immediate decline, causing widespread higher unemployment; the large numbers of people thereby forced out of work would begin to go hungry. At that same meeting, Secretary of State Herter explicitly described these proposals as measures of economic warfare.

In a memorandum dated 6 April 1960, Mr. L. D. Mallory, a senior State Department official, stated that:

> "The only foreseeable means of alienating internal support is through disenchantment and disaffection based on economic dissatisfaction and hardship ... every possible means should be undertaken promptly to weaken the economic life of Cuba".

He suggested taking:

> "... a line of action which ... makes the greatest inroads in denying money and supplies to Cuba, to decrease monetary and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation and the overthrow of the Government."

On 6 July of that same year, the United States adopted one of the measures proposed: the elimination of the Cuban sugar quota. Never again would the United States buy a single pound of sugar from Cuba. A market that was established over the course of more than 100 years between the United States and Cuba, with Cuba guaranteeing the supply of this essential food product to the United States and its allies during the first half of the century, including during the two World Wars from which the United States emerged as the wealthiest, most powerful nation in the world, was wiped out in a second, dealing a cruel blow to the country's major source of employment and wealth and depriving it of essential funds for the food, medicine, fuel and raw materials needed to ensure the material survival of our people.

From that time on, successive economic measures against the Cuban people continued to accumulate until they formed a absolute and total blockade, which went so far as to prevent Cuba from importing even an aspirin produced in the United States, or from exporting to that country a single flower grown in Cuba.

This complete blockade, cynically referred to in official terminology with the euphemistic and apparently

innocuous word "embargo", has continued to intensify over the past 40 years. At the most critical and difficult time in our history, when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the socialist bloc collapsed, and with them the basic markets and sources of supply that the country could count on to withstand the ferocious economic warfare waged against an island only 90 miles from the United States coast, they decided to be yet more unyielding in their approach to Cuba: with truly vulgar and repugnant opportunism, the blockade was intensified to the maximum.

The so-called Torricelli Act of 1992, among other restrictive measures that greatly affected the maritime transport of food and other commodities between Cuba and the rest of the world, prohibited United States subsidiaries based in third countries from trading with Cuba. This put an end to commercial operations that amounted to over $700 million in imports of foodstuffs and medicines from those countries. This genocidal policy reached even more infamous heights with the Helms-Burton Act, which codified all previous administrative restrictions, expanded and tightened the blockade and established it in perpetuity.

Subsequent to the passage of that law, and with the aim of tightening even further the blockade against the Cuban people, numerous amendments, introduced into bills of such urgency and length that many United States lawmakers did not even have time to read them, were adopted by show of hands in the United States Congress. The Cuban-American terrorist mafia, which is closely linked to the extreme right wing, has achieved its goal of changing the blockade from an order from the executive into rigorous and inflexible legislation. The genocide thereby became institutionalized.

Following a 1997 study of the consequences of the blockade for health, the American Association for World Health concluded that it violates the most basic international agreements and conventions governing human rights standards, including the United Nations Charter, the Charter of the Organization of American States and the Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in time of War. The Geneva Conventions, to which some 165 countries, including the United States, are parties, require the free passage of all medical supplies and foodstuffs intended for civilian use in time of war. The United States and Cuba are not at war. Indeed, their Governments have even maintain diplomatic representation in Havana and Washington. However, the American Association for World Health has determined that the embargo's restrictions are a deliberate blockade of the Cuban population's access to food and medicine in peacetime.

In the same report, the American Association for World Health expresses its belief that the United States embargo against Cuba has dramatically harmed the health and nutrition of a large number of ordinary Cuban citizens and concludes that the embargo has significantly increased suffering in Cuba, to the point of causing death.

For seven consecutive years, the Assembly has consistently adopted a resolution on the need to end the economic blockade imposed by the Government of the United States of America on the Cuban people. The condemnation of that genocidal policy has visibly grown from year to year: year on year between 1992 and 1998, the Cuban resolution against the blockade received 59, 88, 101, 117, 137, 143 and 157 votes in favour, while the United States obtained only 3, 4, 2, 3, 3, 3 and 2 votes, including its own. Given the absolute contempt demonstrated by the United States with regard to these General Assembly resolutions, the people of Cuba have decided, independently of the battle taking place in this Assembly, to resort to the legal procedures to which they are entitled in order to demand the appropriate sanctions against those responsible for such acts of genocide.

Cuba's initiative is based on a solid and irrefutable legal foundation. The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was adopted by the Assembly on 9 December 1948 and signed by the Government of the United States of America on 11 December 1948 and by the Republic of Cuba on 28 December 1949. It entered into force on 12 January 1951 and has been signed and ratified by 124 States. Article II of that Convention reads:

> "In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group".

In subparagraph (c), it immediately goes on to include, among these acts,

> "Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part".

Article III stipulates that the following acts, among others, shall be punishable: "(a) Genocide; ...

(d) Attempt to commit genocide; (e) Complicity in genocide". It explicitly states in article IV that

> "Persons committing genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III shall be punished, whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals".

The Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War was signed on 12 August 1949, and was ratified by the Governments of the United States and Cuba; it entered into force on 21 October 1950. A total of 188 States are currently parties to the Convention. Article 23 decrees that

> "Each High Contracting Party shall allow the free passage of all consignments of medical and hospital stores and objects necessary for religious worship intended only for civilians of another High Contracting Party, even if the latter is its adversary. It shall likewise permit the free passage of all consignments of essential foodstuffs, clothing and tonics intended for children under fifteen, expectant mothers and maternity cases".

The first Protocol Additional to that Convention specifically, precisely and categorically stipulates, in its article 54, entitled "Protection of objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population", that

> "1. Starvation of civilians as a method of warfare is prohibited.
>
> "2. It is prohibited to attack, destroy, remove or render useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as foodstuffs, agricultural areas for the production of foodstuffs, crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies and irrigation works, for the specific purpose of denying them for their sustenance value to the civilian population or to the adverse Party, whatever the motive, whether in order to starve out civilians, to cause them to move away, or for any other motive".

Article VII of the 1948 Convention on genocide states, without room for the slightest doubt, that

> "Persons charged with genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III shall be tried by a competent tribunal of the State in the territory of which the act was committed".

Subparagraph (e) of article III of that Convention stipulates with the same precision that accomplices to genocide shall also be punished.

As a consequence, the National Assembly of People's Power of the Republic of Cuba declared on 13 September 1999: first, that the economic blockade imposed on Cuba by the Government of the United States constitutes an international crime of genocide in accordance with the definition stipulated in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted by the General Assembly on 9 December 1948; second, that, on the basis of the arguments put forward and of the foregoing statement, it proclaims Cuba's right to demand that such acts be punished; third, that as a result of the grave, systematic and ongoing genocide carried out over the course of 40 years against the people of Cuba, and in accordance with international standards, principles, agreements and laws, Cuban courts have the right to try and punish the guilty parties, whether they be present or absent; fourth, that acts of genocide and other war crimes are not subject to any statute of limitations; fifth, that the guilty parties can be punished even with a sentence of life imprisonment; sixth, that criminal responsibility does not exempt the aggressor State from providing material compensation for the human and economic damage it may have caused; and seventh, that it calls on the international community for support in this struggle to defend the most elementary principles of justice, the right to life, peace and the freedom of all peoples.

Here in this Hall today, as members of the Cuban delegation to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, there are three young Cubans representing our country's university students, secondary-school students, and children and adolescents. They are here on behalf of the social organizations that went before the relevant courts to file the claim against the United States Government, demanding reparations and compensation for the damages and injuries suffered by thousands of people. Those same organizations also took the legal initiative of proposing to the National Assembly of People's Power the proclamation I have just cited.

Here with us as well are three outstanding personalities in Cuban medicine, Deputies in the National Assembly, who have testified before that body on the tragic harm that has resulted from the blockade on medicines imposed against our country. There are also three Christian deputies, whose profound ethical, religious and human convictions led them to support the

proclamation made in our National Assembly demanding the trial and punishment of the guilty parties.

These individuals are prepared to respond, here in the United States, to any questions posed to them, or to meet with the press, academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, legislators, senators or even any committee of the United States Congress. We are prepared not only to make accusations, but also to engage in debate and prove the facts that support them.

The President: I call next on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, His Excellency Mr. Kassymzhomart K. Tokaev.

Mr. Tokaev (Kazakhstan): Let me congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the high office of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. We are confident that under your able leadership we will be able to address successfully the items on our agenda.

Please allow me also to convey our appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti, for his considerable contribution to the work of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session.

We pay a tribute to the Secretary-General for his efforts to meet the unprecedented and complex challenges facing the United Nations.

On the threshold of the third millennium — as at the beginning of this century — the world community must deal with substantive issues of war and peace. On the one hand, the process of globalization, which is unfolding before our eyes, has triggered a rich flow of ideas, capital, technologies, goods and services all around the world, having profoundly transformed our societies. Philosophically, mankind has taken a big step forward towards qualitatively new dimensions of existence.

On the other hand, the world continues to be rocked by conflicts rooted in causes that have become compounded despite the advent of global technologies and communications. First among the causes of conflict is ethnic, national and religious intolerance. It is absolutely unacceptable that this most dangerous virus is spreading rapidly throughout many regions of today's world, giving rise to terrorist acts and bloody conflicts. The danger is that people affected by conflicts look for the sources of their troubles among other nationalities and religions. As a result, we face a vicious circle wherein death and desperation reign unchecked. We are confident that civilized society, by pooling its resources, will eventually be able to break out of this vicious circle, having convinced people of the benefits of a conflict-free existence. If we talk about the antagonism between war and peace, then we have every right to demand the use of means to enforcing a sustainable peace, including military means.

At the same time, it is impossible to ignore the fact that the present world order is in desperate need of reliable measures to ensure balance between the essential elements of its support structures. Kazakhstan shares the view of those States which believe that in the next century the world should be multi-polar and free of centres of power and dividing lines, confrontations and showdowns, interference in the internal affairs of others and imposition of policy directives. Cooperation and mutual understanding, democracy and sustainable development will define the core of the coming world order.

We believe that the United Nations remains a unique intergovernmental institution that ensures a positive trend in the development of international relations. Kazakhstan calls for a strengthening of the United Nations, the only forum that is universal both in terms of its composition and in terms of the comprehensiveness of its agenda. Only the United Nations has the right to address fundamental issues of peace and security.

The Yugoslav crisis has clearly demonstrated how urgent the issue of strengthening the authority of the United Nations has become. We are becoming increasingly convinced of the need to enhance the responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security and to make authorization of certain actions its exclusive prerogative.

The nature of many conflicts makes this an especially challenging task. That is why we believe that to be able to adapt to new political realities, the Security Council should enter the twenty-first century renewed and strengthened through the admission of new permanent members, first of all Japan and Germany, as well as non-permanent members representing different regions of the world.

The efforts to consolidate the international regime for the non-proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction and put in place effective controls over the production of fissile material remain at the centre of our policy for achieving global security and stability.

Kazakhstan has made an important contribution to non-proliferation and to putting an end to nuclear-weapon testing. We consider the decision to admit Kazakhstan to membership of the Conference on Disarmament as adequate recognition of our actions in this direction. Renunciation of nuclear weapons and accession to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty have become natural choices for our country, which has felt the full brunt of the harmful effects of nuclear testing. Kazakhstan vigorously advocates further consolidation of the non-proliferation regime, and supports the initiative to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia.

Our country has consistently called for the creation of security structures in Asia. As is well known, at the Assembly's forty-seventh session, the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbaev, put forward an initiative to convene a Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA). On 14 September, the opening day of the current General Assembly session, after seven years of negotiations and discussions, Almaty hosted the first meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Asian States members of the Conference. Government officials responsible for foreign policy signed a Declaration of Principles Guiding Relations between CICA Member States which confirmed the Asian States' strong commitment to and goodwill towards efforts to ensure security and stability in the region.

Thus, for the first time in history, a legal foundation for an Asian security system has been laid. It is difficult to overestimate the significance of this development in the context of the international community's efforts to strengthen international security. We are talking here about a region that is home to more than 3.5 billion people and that accounts for more than 40 per cent of world trade.

We are grateful to all the States participating in the CICA process for their support for our initiative and for their genuine willingness to work together to build a security system for Asia. I take this opportunity to express our appreciation to Secretary-General Annan, for his close attention to and support for the initiative by Kazakhstan.

Recent political developments attest to how urgent the need is to create a security system in Asia. I refer here to terrorist incursions in southern Kyrgyzstan and to terrorist acts in the Northern Caucasus in Russia.

From the point of view of security in our region, we believe that the outcome of the latest summit of the "Shanghai Five" is very important. Its participants created a mechanism of confidence providing for transparency in military activity and reduction of those activities in border areas, settlement of border issues and a regular exchanges of information on military activities. The heads of the five States believe that multipolarity reflects a general trend in the development of the contemporary world and contributes to the long-term stability of the international situation.

Kazakhstan calls for a lasting and just peace in Afghanistan within the negotiation process, according to the "six plus two" formula. At the same time, we believe that the Afghan peace process should involve all the States concerned. For this reason, Kazakhstan supports the proposal to convene a representative international conference in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on the settlement of the conflict in Afghanistan.

Kazakhstan highly appreciates the United Nations efforts to promote the integration of the economies in transition into the world economy. Our country counts on continued cooperation with the United Nations on the issues of consultative services and technical assistance. We are firmly committed to the policy of deepening regional economic cooperation and actively using for this purpose the capacity of the United Nations. Our country is satisfied with its cooperation with the Economic Commission for Europe and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in the elaboration and implementation of the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia.

We support the revival of the Silk Road. Geographically, Kazakhstan, along with other Central Asian States, plays the role of a bridge connecting the two continents. During the era of the Roman Empire trade routes between Rome and Shanghai passed through the region. The revival of the Silk Road will boost the economic development of the Central Asian region.

In current conditions it is envisioned that the Silk Road will be revived by building on three pillars: energy, a transcontinental transportation system and telecommunications. The thrust of this project — which reflects global, regional and local interests — is to develop the natural resources of the region, first of all its large oil and gas fields. One has to bear in mind, however, that no large-scale pipeline project can be realized without the hydrocarbon resources of Kazakhstan.

In view of the increased competition in the world energy-carriers markets, Kazakhstan is giving priority attention to the construction of oil and gas pipelines. The northern Caspian pipeline consortium project, scheduled for completion in 2001, is a top priority for our country, because when it is operational Kazakhstan will be able to double, at a minimum, both its oil production and its export deliveries to foreign markets.

We pin many of our hopes on the development of the hydrocarbon resources of the Caspian Sea shelf. For this reason we believe that the issue of the legal status of this sea is of fundamental importance. Kazakhstan commends a breakthrough agreement with Russia on the delimitation of the seabed in the northern part of the Caspian Sea on the basis of a modified median line.

The issues of sustainable development, environmental protection and rehabilitation of ecological disaster areas have become especially pressing at the end of this century, and demand immediate action. Kazakhstan is interested in the mobilization of the international community to solve environmental problems, because it has disaster areas, such as the region of the former Semipalatinsk nuclear testing ground, the dying Aral Sea and other zones. Our country, which suffers from desertification and floods, is also directly affected by global climate changes.

On behalf of the Government of Kazakhstan, I would like to express our great appreciation to the States concerned for their support for the efforts to overcome the serious social, ecological and humanitarian problems of the Semipalatinsk region. The adoption of two General Assembly resolutions on international cooperation and coordination for the human and ecological rehabilitation and economic development of the Semipalatinsk region has undoubtedly contributed to an interest in and reflection on the outstanding issues.

Special words of appreciation are due to the Government of Japan and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for sponsoring an international conference convened at the beginning of September in Tokyo. The outcome of this representative forum reverberated throughout our country. We consider this conference a practical contribution by the Government of Japan and the UNDP to the implementation of the relevant General Assembly resolutions. In this regard, I cannot miss this opportunity to recognize important work by the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, as well as by the donor countries that acted as cosponsors of the conference.

Kazakhstan is taking concrete steps to democratize its society and to deepen its political reforms. Kazakhstan's head of State has introduced a programme that covers such important areas as elections, political parties, the Parliament, the judicial system, the status of women and the mass media. Earlier this year the first open and contested presidential elections were held in Kazakhstan.

The refinement of the election process continues. The law on elections has been amended to reflect the recommendations of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Its provisions will be used in the parliamentary elections scheduled for this October. The election process is becoming more representative, encouraging active involvement of candidates and voters. A programme of phased transition to holding elections for local and regional governments is being developed. The role of non-governmental organizations, an important element of a civil society, is being enhanced. The judicial system and the mass media are steadily becoming more independent.

Achieving an open society, with a market economy, is the course for Kazakhstan's further development. The process of democratization in our country is gaining momentum and has become irreversible.

Along with political reforms, Kazakhstan is taking vigorous actions to protect the long-term interests of foreign investors. Our objective is to ensure — through the creation of a favourable investment climate in the country — its full integration into the world economic system of today.

Kazakhstan expresses support for the efforts of the Secretary-General to reform the Organization in order to enhance its effectiveness and capability to respond adequately to emerging problems and challenges. We believe that concrete results in the renewal of the Organization can be achieved only through joint efforts of all Member States. That is why all States should continue their coordinated efforts to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the promotion of global stability and security in the next century.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Singapore, His Excellency Mr. Shunmugam Jayakumar.

Mr. Jayakumar (Singapore): First let convey my warmest congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election. As we enter the new millennium, the United Nations is crossing a significant threshold, and we need a seasoned hand to lead us. Your long experience with the United Nations, first as a freedom fighter, now as Foreign Minister of Namibia, will stand us in good stead.

Let me also thank your distinguished predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti of Uruguay, for the good work he did last year.

As a fellow small State, Singapore would also like to warmly welcome the three new Members to the United Nations: Kiribati, Nauru and Tonga. We hope that they will also join the forum of small States.

I wish to pose this question: Will the United Nations survive in the twenty-first century? I have framed this question provocatively because I believe that the United Nations has not yet adequately come to grips with the central challenges of its next phase of development. Unless it does so, my question may not be just rhetorical.

Mr. Ingólfsson (Iceland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

To be sure, the United Nations has been seized of efforts at reform for several years. But what is required must go beyond the modification of existing institutions or organizational structures. The issue is not just how to make the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Secretariat or other organs work more effectively, although that is important. But we cannot succeed if we neglect the broader context of such endeavours. The key question is whether the current United Nations is conceptually and constitutionally sound.

The simple but hard-won lesson of this century's experiments with international organizations, from the League to the United Nations, is that the United Nations must work within the framework of the state system. If the United Nations has worked better or has lasted longer than the League, it is because the United Nations has accommodated the state system rather than posed a direct threat to it. Its Member States see the United Nations as an additional protective umbrella, not as a body that diminishes them.

The League's Covenant was based on different premises. It emphasized disarmament. It promoted collective security. It required States to submit disputes to arbitration and judicial settlement. By doing so, the League posed an explicit challenge to the rights of States. On the other hand, the United Nations can do nothing that its Members do not expressly allow it to do. Our Charter is clear and explicit that the United Nations is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of its Members. It also stresses the concomitant principle of non-interference in internal affairs.

But these premises are now under pressure. As the twentieth century draws to a close, the state system is on the verge of major transformation. This will profoundly affect all Members and the United Nations itself.

I do not predict the end of the nation State. The concept of sovereignty is undergoing profound modification, but it does not seem likely that the nation State will simply disappear. No viable alternative to organizing international political life has yet emerged, no matter how inadequate or ineffective the current form may have become. Radical proposals for restructuring the framework of the state system will inevitably invite disappointment. The United Nations must therefore work within the existing framework, even as that framework is being transformed. Herein lie the subtlety and the difficulty of the new challenge.

Two forces are impelling change: the pressures of a truly integrated world economy and the end of the cold war. Neither is adequately understood; even less understood is their interplay. This dialectic simultaneously impels an unprecedented degree of international cooperation and makes international cooperation more difficult to achieve.

There have always been issues which required States to work together. Interdependence is not new. In a sense, it is as old as the state system. To be sure, the number and scope of transnational issues that require international cooperative action have now expanded, but this is a change of degree, not of kind. Globalization is not just more interdependence.

While globalization's effects are most evident in finance and economics, there are far-reaching implications across a range of issues. It affects the very notion of statehood and government as they have hitherto been understood.

The essential function of any Government is to govern — to provide public goods and services to its citizens within its borders. But in a globalized economy,

national borders no longer include sufficient territory to function as self-contained economic units. Financial geography and economic geography no longer coincide with political geography. This mismatch means that Governments no longer have a monopoly of legitimate power within their own state boundaries. This does not challenge the *de jure* sovereignty of States, but profoundly alters every Government's de facto capacity to govern.

The challenge is not, as it was throughout history, merely of one State circumscribing the sovereignty of another — of the powerful forcing their will on the weak. The real challenge is now within each State, no matter how powerful.

Dealing with this phenomenon poses a different kind of challenge than just insisting on the legal concept of sovereignty or persuading Governments to work together on specific issues. It forces a reconceptualization of the very idea of government and statehood. It requires a complete change of mindset by the powerful as well as by the weak. This will be difficult and painful to achieve.

What is required is an unprecedented and qualitatively new kind of international cooperation, not just cooperation based on the alignment of national interests, as has occurred throughout history. It requires the redefinition of what constitutes both "nation" and "interests". States can no longer just collide or cooperate at the boundaries of their sovereignties. It demands nothing less than shared responsibility for governance and a pooling of sovereignties.

For this new kind of international cooperation to be constructed and take root, the imperative of cooperation must be supported by practical experience that demonstrates that it is superior to any other political alternative. It is here that the intersection and interplay of globalization and the post-cold-war international order complicate matters.

The end of the cold war at first seemed to promise a new dawn for the United Nations, opening up vast potentialities for international cooperation unfettered by ideological conflict. But these hopes have now been dashed. In reality, the end of the cold war may have made international cooperation less likely.

Paradoxically, the ever-greater integration of the world economy has been accompanied by increasing political fragmentation. The cold war was not just an ideological geopolitical struggle; the cold war imposed identities that transcended nationalism. Even those who sought to escape the cold war in fact defined themselves in relation to it. Irrespective of which side we stood for, the cold war was the organizing principle for international action and the concept by which we understood global events.

To those disoriented by the pressures of globalization, the end of the cold war provided an opportunity to seek reassurance and a new identity in real or imagined ethnic nationalisms. The resulting proliferation of States and the lack of a clear organizing principle for international action have made cooperation problematic.

The end of ideological conflict and the increasing influence of market principles in all areas of life are making economic efficiency an essential condition for evaluating political actions. But globalization has simultaneously eroded the ability of States to muster the political consensus of their own citizens for such action. It is therefore not very surprising that the right kind of new response has not yet been forthcoming.

Of course, lip service is being paid to the need for new international institutions to deal with new transnational problems or to the reform of existing international institutions, the United Nations among them. But the more usual reaction to the mismatch between economic geography and the political geography of state boundaries has been defensive or a sterile triumphalism: a new protectionism, xenophobic or nostalgic nationalisms or, where a country feels strong and confident enough, a new kind of extraterritoriality, reminiscent of the nineteenth century. Strong States try to project their national laws beyond their boundaries or insist on their standards as conditionalities for trade and other kinds of cooperative interactions.

The recognition that problems are global, and the almost universal acceptance of the market, commands at best only superficial international consensus. The real responses, the most concrete and practical responses, have been regional rather than universal.

This process is most advanced in Europe and North America, through the European Union and the North American Free Trade Agreement, and less so in Latin America and Asia, through the Southern Cone Common Market, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council and the Association of South-East Asian Nations Free Trade Area. Tentative linkages are being explored

between regions. Africa has been only peripherally engaged. But relying on regionalism as more than a stopgap in a globalized world creates a latent instability. If projected unchecked into the twenty-first century, this must ultimately affect basic issues of war and peace. It is obviously unacceptable for an entire continent to be marginalized.

So a truly universal approach to shared responsibility for global governance and pooling of sovereignties to deal with global problems requires an international consensus on what is legitimately in the general interest of still sovereign States. No matter how compelling the issue or problem, this is not self-evident.

The definition of what is in the legitimate public interest within a specific State or nation is the product of a long historical process, cultural attributes and a level of economic development. It is the basic stuff of most political contests in most States. Consensus is not easy to reach domestically. It certainly will be even more difficult in an international system that is concurrently united and divided by globalization and the end of the cold war.

The international problem is compounded because the expectation that the post-cold-war international system would be multipolar has proved premature. A multipolar world is still more a matter of potential rather than a current reality. This has engendered discomfort.

The war in Kosovo focused such feelings. It threw into brutal relief a trend that has been under way for some time: that the absolute sovereignty of States has to be qualified to require compliance with generally accepted standards of conduct and respect for human rights.

This is not all that novel a notion. The traditional approach of non-interference in domestic affairs was never as absolute in practice as in theory. The doctrine of humanitarian intervention dates from the nineteenth century, when the powerful claimed the right to intervene in the affairs of the weak. The war in Kosovo resonated with such historical memories, thus adding to the discomfort.

It is a fact that sovereignty now coexists uneasily with a different current of international law concerned with the rights of individuals. These trends have not yet been reconciled. But both trends are facts that cannot be wished away. In any case, their logical compatibility is not the real issue.

Notwithstanding Kosovo, it does not appear that the majority of States have much to fear if they treat their citizens well. There are many countries that treat their citizens badly without any suggestion of any sanction harsher than moral disapproval. Concern for human rights has always been selective.

The more critical issue is related but different. The loss of territorial reference points engendered by globalization's mismatch between economic and political geographies and the loss of strategic meaning after the end of the cold war have made most international reactions ad hoc.

We lurch from crisis to crisis, with no clear sense of direction or consistency. Why Kosovo or East Timor and not Africa? Are the rights of humans everywhere not universal? How to choose when to intervene among the all-too-many conflicts? In his statement to the General Assembly this year, the Secretary-General has posed several thoughtful challenges for us: "Nothing in the Charter precludes a recognition that there are rights beyond borders." What the Charter does say is that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest. The Secretary-General then asked, what is the common interest? Who shall define it? Who will defend it? Under whose authority? With what means of intervention?

I agree with the Secretary-General that these questions will need to be answered and criteria established. Rules and objective criteria for such interventions are urgently needed. Failure to do so will breed uncertainty and instability. If a new balance has to be struck between sovereignty and other values, it should be struck knowingly and with our eyes open. The alternative is to be led, one step at a time, with the best of intentions, by ad hoc solutions.

This will be a major challenge for the international community if the United Nations is to remain relevant in the coming century. This is because we can expect to face many more situations which will pose the dilemma of reconciling State sovereignty with international intervention to redress violations of human rights.

We are all familiar with the pressures of the international media and non-governmental actors. These are realities but provide no satisfactory answers. It is not politically acceptable that questions of international peace and stability should be decided on an ad hoc basis. It is even less acceptable that consensus on the need for more

peaceful modes of international cooperation should reflect the preoccupations of a few.

What we need is to replicate on a global scale those conditions that have made the pluralistic societies in advanced economies still capable of collective action. No Government anywhere can rule by coercion alone or lead legitimately merely because it wields supreme power. Resort to coercion or naked power is more often than not taken to be a symptom of failure of government and not its defining feature.

What is required, therefore, on the international stage is what has already been accepted domestically — indeed, insisted upon in the name of democracy: a modest acceptance of the reality of diversity and a nuanced appreciation of the difference between friends, friendly critics and honest disagreements. Persuading those already disoriented by globalization and rapid technological changes requires patient and skilful diplomacy in the artful balance of competing interests.

Despite the handicaps under which it laboured, and for all its imperfections, the United Nations has played a critical role in some of the great world issues of the first four decades of its existence. It eased the pangs of decolonization. It provided a cathartic theatre to vent the most dangerous passions of the cold war. It provided the means for the super-Powers to back down from unwanted confrontations without grievous political costs to either. From time to time, it scored notable successes in peacekeeping operations around the world. At the same time, the United Nations, through its specialized agencies, continues to play a vital developmental role for the majority of its Members.

But the United Nations experiences of the last decade have been less happy. The United Nations has played at best only a very marginal role in the great developments of the closing years of the twentieth century that I have tried to describe. It risks becoming increasingly divorced from the very international realities in which it is inescapably embedded.

Like all organizations of sovereign States, the United Nations can only provide a mechanism for its Members to use for whatever purpose their agreements or disagreements dictate. But the United Nations cannot be just a tool of the few, a repository for issues that no country is willing or knows how to confront, or a convenient scapegoat. The hard fact is that these are the roles that the United Nations has been forced to play in recent years. It cannot continue on this path without permanent damage.

In our century, the trend towards international organization, towards the development of a more predictable pattern of relationships between States and international regimes that transcend individual sovereignties is, I believe, established. There is no going back. Whether we like it or not, the world has become too complex to be dealt with except multilaterally.

But this does not mean that any particular international institution will necessarily play an effective role in the organization of international life in the next century. The United Nations cannot assume that it will survive intact, just by clinging on to structures and processes conceived in 1945. The world has changed dramatically since then. It will continue to do so. The United Nations has no choice but to change in tandem.

This imperative is clear. What is unclear is how the United Nations should change. That is why I have posed more questions than I have provided answers. The process of discussion must start now. The mechanism is at our disposal. The responsibility to use it is ours. Whether we will engage ourselves in this responsibility quickly enough to make a difference to the United Nations is for us to choose. I do not know how much time we have. I only know that the time left is finite.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, His Excellency Mr. Mohammed Said Al-Sahaf.

Mr. Al-Sahaf (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. I am fully confident that your experience and competence will contribute to the success of this session.

With the end of the cold war, there was a feeling that the world would see balanced international relations, characterized by peace, stability and well-being. But the state of affairs has proved otherwise; the international imbalance continues and is being used to place the logic of hegemony above all else in order to perpetuate it in the world and its international organizations, particularly the United Nations.

Because of this situation, the world has witnessed a series of deep and rapid-moving changes that have led to the emergence of many areas of political and military

conflicts with dangerous consequences reflected in the human, economic and social conditions of many regions in the world. These conflicts have claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians and have caused the huge squandering of material and human resources.

The world will enter the new century in this fashion. The picture before us demonstrates the tyranny of force, the imposition of hegemony and the aggravating economic problems by which the States of the South are increasingly marginalized to the extent that their entities and elements of survival are about to be eliminated. This will lead to economic subordination, inevitably followed by political subordination. In this context, there has emerged a new phenomenon of imposing various kinds of embargoes and economic sanctions, withholding development and depriving States of the exercise of their economic rights as enshrined in international law and covenants. The catastrophic effects of this imbalance are reflected in the social conditions of many regions in the world. These effects are demonstrated by an increase in the intensity of poverty, the spread of illiteracy, deterioration of the health situation and degradation of living standards. It can also be seen in the marginalization of many social segments of society, especially youth, because of lack of jobs; the same goes for the increase in crime and the prevalence of drugs, as well as other serious social problems which can hardly be controlled.

It is no secret that one of the main reasons for the aggravation of this situation is the arbitrary imposition of comprehensive sanctions and embargoes on many States in the world for political purposes, without any sound foundation in international law. It is obvious that this policy has resulted in tragic effects on the economic and social structures of the targeted States and on third countries. It constitutes a flagrant violation of the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and the principles of justice.

The most dangerous phenomenon witnessed during the present decade, which in the course of this session has become an endeavour orchestrated by a group of Western States, is the advocacy of so-called humanitarian intervention. This doctrine, which has no place in international law, stems from an organized infringement of the most fundamental rules of the present international order, such as sovereignty, political independence, territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs. These principles cannot provide a protective shield for grave violations of human rights or for intervention, sometimes with the use of force, in order to protect those rights. No one should be deceived by this doctrine as the new framework for a modern forum of neo-colonialism based on the logic of power.

First of all, we should realize that no situation used as a justification for this doctrine is free from the external political interventions that led in the first place to the emergence of such a situation. Accordingly, it could not be claimed that international responsibility for the situation rests exclusively with the targeted Government. On the other hand, we should also realize that the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and the mechanisms of the Organization are not devoid of modalities to deal with any situation of the type advanced to justify this doctrine.

The problem does not lie with the principles, rules and procedures. Rather, it rests with the selfish and unilateral policies of the controlling Powers, whose interests cannot be served by using the United Nations mechanisms established for the correct application of the principles and rules of the Charter, which reflect the joint will and collective interests of the members of the international community.

The logic of this Western doctrine is not unknown to Iraq. At an early date, President Saddam Hussein drew attention to the dangers of the policy of might and opportunism in international relations that is carried out at the expense of the balance between rights and obligations and joint responsibility, as reflected in the Charter and in international law.

It is not justifiable to consider the role of the United Nations as marginalized after it has become captive to the views of the controlling Powers in international relations and their selfish interests. Regardless of what the Charter provides in terms of rights, duties and procedures, we are convinced that the doctrine of presumed humanitarian intervention represents a dangerous destructive tool that affects the gains that have accrued through joint efforts in favour of the general international interest, as evidenced by the records of this Organization. The universalization of the concepts of this doctrine would mean the complete denial of the will of the vast majority of States, with the result of destroying the present international order. Iraq joins all delegations which have declared a position contrary to this Western doctrine. We call for joint efforts to confront it.

I wish here to refer to a live example of the logic of power experienced in Iraq in 1998, at around this time of year, when the Security Council was discussing the arrangements for conducting a comprehensive review of the implementation by Iraq of its obligations under Security Council resolutions, especially those relating to disarmament, with a view to considering the lifting of the comprehensive sanctions imposed on Iraq since August 1990. While the Security Council was convened to discuss the Secretary-General's report on Iraq's cooperation in the field of disarmament, the United States and British forces stationed in the Gulf region launched a large-scale military aggression against Iraq, from 16 December through 20 December 1998, using the lies and fabrications of Richard Butler as a pretext for their aggression. That aggression claimed the lives of a large number of innocent civilians, in addition to destroying many infrastructure sites, as well as much industrial equipment which had already been subject to a strict monitoring system established by the former Special Commission, which did not detect any violation of Security Council resolutions at those sites.

In spite of this gross violation of the Charter and mechanisms of the Organization, the Security Council, the main organ concerned with the situation, remained completely crippled and did not take any immediate collective action. The international condemnation of the American/British aggression against Iraq last December did not come from the Security Council. Rather, it came from Governments and peoples of Member States on a larger scale after a noticeable lull. As the Assembly will recall, the Security Council was preoccupied with a bare-faced process for gaining time through mandating panels to assess the special situation concerning Iraq's implementation of its obligations under the resolutions of the Security Council.

Those panels began their work unilaterally, without any advanced consultation with the Government of Iraq and without listening to its point of view. This process resulted in reports reflecting the political balance within the Security Council, which distanced it from the real substance of the situation. At that point the process reached the stage of the presentation of draft resolutions ignoring the rights and obligations provided for in the resolutions of the Council itself. In fact, those draft resolutions added new obligations for Iraq, not contained in the relevant resolutions of the Security Council that Iraq had already implemented.

While the Security Council resolutions imposed various obligations on Iraq, they in turn imposed a specific obligation on the Security Council, stipulating that the comprehensive embargo was to be lifted once Iraq fulfilled its obligations under the same resolutions. But what has happened in the course of the last nine years is that the Council, during 40 sessions held to review Iraq's implementation of its obligations, has failed to take a decision to lift the comprehensive embargo, much less to ease the situation even by 1 per cent, despite the fact that all countries, even Iraq's enemies — for example, the United States of America — have attested that after nine years of intensive implementation under the severest circumstances and threats of continued aggression against Iraq nothing important has been left unfulfilled.

Why then has the Council failed to lift the embargo on Iraq? The reason behind all this is the American hegemony over the Council, which prevents the Council through various means from properly implementing its resolutions. We have seen for several months intensive endeavours in the Security Council, particularly by the five permanent members, to adopt a unified position on Iraq.

The correct position that conforms with the resolutions of the Security Council is very clear and uncontroversial. Once the logic of law and justice is adhered to, Iraq demands its clear and legitimate rights — namely, the lifting of the iniquitous sanctions imposed on it in accordance with the Council's resolutions. These resolutions were agreed upon by the five permanent members and have been implemented by Iraq over the last nine years. Now it is the turn of those five States to honour their obligations. Iraq's position should be clear to all. To gain Iraq's approval, any proposal or resolution — or consequences, if there are any — should be based on international law and non-selectivity, otherwise the results will meet with a definite rejection and we will continue our struggle to lift the sanctions comprehensively and finally in order to achieve all our legitimate demands.

It has become clear to all, through public, personal and official testimonies, that the former Special Commission — a panel unfortunately bearing the name of the United Nations and acting nominally under its flag — has been used by the United States and Great Britain to achieve their aggressive objectives against Iraq's people, sovereignty and security. In order to achieve the ultimate end of its main mission, the former Special Commission had adopted two methods for its work in Iraq: first, conducting espionage activities for American, British and Israeli intelligence so as to enable them to realize their objectives of destabilizing Iraq politically and removing

its patriotic regime; and, secondly,keeping the embargo in place by reporting to the Security Council that the Special Commission had not yet fulfilled its mandate of disarming Iraq.

During its work in Iraq, the former Special Commission resorted to dubious methods to falsify facts and present them in a manner that was in line with the American approach, which is hostile to Iraq. The last of these had to do with the issue of VX vials found in the Commission's headquarters at Baghdad. Those samples were used by the Commission to contaminate the missing warheads that were sent to American laboratories for analysis. That was in order to enable the United States Administration to find evidence supporting its allegations regarding Iraq's weapons programmes. The Commission's dubious practices were not limited to this, but went as far as hastily destroying the VX samples in order to conceal the irrefutable evidence of the Commission's involvement in the American conspiracy against Iraq.

The American attempts to distort and pervert the relationship between Iraq and the Security Council have not been limited to exploiting the former Special Commission. They reached their ugliest forms in the open obstruction of any efforts to ease the effects of the comprehensive embargo imposed on Iraq, which has resulted in bitter suffering for the people of Iraq, particularly its children.

The obstacles experienced during the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding signed between Iraq and the United Nations regarding the oil-for-food formula — which all reports and realities indicate cannot meet the essential humanitarian needs of the people of Iraq — are striking evidence of the American Administration's insistence on harming the people of Iraq and depriving them of their fundamental humanitarian rights, as enshrined in all international covenants.

It is worth mentioning that the total value of the supplies that arrived in Iraq for the five initial phases of the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding is almost equal to the funds deducted from the revenues of Iraqi oil sales to cover the expenses of the Special Commission, the expenses of the United Nations in Iraq and the costs of the United Nations Compensation Commission. The total value of the supplies that have arrived in Iraq from the beginning of 1997 to the present is $4,948,300,000, while the funds deducted for the Special Commission, the United Nations services and the Compensation Commission are $4,041,185,000.

A cursory look at these two figures clearly shows the failure of the Memorandum of Understanding to meet the essential humanitarian needs of the people of Iraq. The methods the United States and Britain use in dealing with the contracts that are related to humanitarian needs, and the deliberate delay in processing these contracts, make the main goal of the Memorandum of Understanding the financing of the expenses of the United Nations instead of securing the essential humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people and stopping the deterioration of their humanitarian and health situation.

This also exposes the intentions of the American and British Governments to strip the Memorandum of its humanitarian substance by putting on hold the contracts directly related to the health situation of the people of Iraq. For example, while the value of the contracts signed for water, sanitation and electricity has amounted to $352 million, the value of the supplies that have arrived in Iraq so far is only $64 million — that is, only 18 per cent of the total value of those contracts. The rest has been put on hold by the British and the Americans.

The most striking evidence of the suffering of the children of Iraq as a result of this unjust, comprehensive embargo is the 12 August 1999 report of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which contains statistics on child mortality resulting from malnutrition, shortages of medicines and the deteriorating economic and nutritional situation of Iraqi mothers. The report has proved decisively that the embargo imposed on Iraq is the main reason for the huge increase in the child mortality rate.

The United States Administration has spared no costs to distort the facts about the Memorandum of Understanding, or spared any tendentious lies and allegations about the distribution of food and medical supplies. The Secretary-General's reports on the Iraq programme, which are based on the reports of United Nations observers deployed throughout Iraq, have proved the accuracy, regularity and equity of the distribution process of all humanitarian supplies received under the Memorandum of Understanding.

The United States of America deliberately works to maintain the embargo and to double the suffering of the people of Iraq, despite the disappearance of all the reasons linked to the imposition of the embargo. This American objective has become quite clear through the many statements made by American officials that make

the embargo a tool to achieve the hostile American political policy against Iraq.

One of the basic pillars of the hostile American/British policy against Iraq is the imposition of the two no-fly zones on Iraq. This constitutes a violation of the United Nations Charter and international law. We have already mentioned the evidence about this in a letter to the President of the Security Council dated 15 January 1999. This has also been confirmed by the views expressed by some permanent members and by others inside and outside the deliberations of the Council.

It is well-known that the continuation of these no-fly zones is a means to perpetuate the aggression with a view to achieving the purposes of the Anglo-American political scheme against Iraq. American officials do not hesitate to indicate their real intentions of using these daily bombardment operations to achieve the United States Administration's goals against Iraq's independence and sovereignty and to destabilize its patriotic Government.

The Washington Post published on 31 January 1999 an article quoting a senior official of the United States Administration describing a certain attack as a means of reaching the goal in a way that satisfied all objectives without any loss, and saying that if the United States were to carry out a massive campaign, people would inquire about what had provoked such attacks.

Proceeding from this policy of partitioning the aggression, the American and British warplanes have been carrying out daily exercises in a show of power that violates Iraq's airspace. In this way they launch savage bombardment operations against civil and economic sites in Iraq, including communication stations, oil pumping stations and private houses. Even mosques and churches have not been spared these continued savage attacks; the churches include the Church of Mar Matti, which goes back to the fourth century AD and which the American and British aircraft bombed on 11 August 1999.

From the aggression of December 1998 to the present, the total number of sorties carried out by American and British aircraft amounted to 12,143, of which 9,830, launched from Saudi and Kuwaiti territory, were carried out in southern Iraq. Two thousand three hundred and thirteen (2,313) sorties were carried out in northern Iraq from Turkish territory.

The United States Administration is seeking to find inconsistent pretexts for these daily acts of aggression, to which hundreds of innocent civilians fall victim. It claims that the bombing of civilians is in legitimate self-defence against Iraqi air force attacks.

Let us ask this: where does the United States derive the right to defend an act that lacks any kind of basic legal legitimacy? Who gives the American aggressors the right to act in self-defence, as they claim, in Iraqi airspace? The acts carried out by the United States Administration represent a declared war waged against the people of Iraq. This is a charade — no more, no less. A senior Pentagon official, in describing these operations in the *The Washington Post* on 2 September 1999, admitted that this was a low-level war.

Proceeding from its legitimate right to self-defence, which is guaranteed in all international instruments and covenants, Iraq will not hesitate to counter all American and British acts of aggression that aim at violating the integrity of its airspace and territory and threaten its security as well as that of its people.

Iraq will continue to confront American and British aggression by all available means and potential. It will not yield to American blackmail. The hostile policy of the United States towards Iraq, which runs counter to the Charter of the United Nations and international law, has been made clear in official statements by senior officials in the United States Administration that stress that the United States is determined to unseat the patriotic Government of Iraq and dismember its national unity.

In addition, the highest American legislative body has enacted laws that allow the Administration to interfere in Iraq's internal affairs, to allocate huge sums of money to carry out acts of terrorism, sabotage and assassination inside Iraq and to appoint high-ranking officials in the Administration to oversee these immoral and illegitimate tasks.

This American policy has contributed to encouraging Turkish forces to carry out large-scale military operations inside Iraqi territory on the pretext of chasing elements of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). These Turkish military operations have caused instability and disorder in northern Iraq and pose a threat to Iraq's national security and territorial integrity. Iraq has regularly reported these repeated Turkish acts of aggression to the United Nations Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council. These acts constitute a violation of the principles of good-neighbourliness and a threat to international peace and security in the region. But the United Nations

has taken no action to curb these operations, and the reason is very clear: it is a reflection of the United States policy aimed at maintaining the abnormal situation in Iraq.

The continued United States hegemony and governance of the destinies of the peoples of the world, as well as of international economic and political organizations, confront the United Nations with its most serious challenge ever. The United Nations should stand up to this domination and prove its ability to restore equilibrium so as to realize the purposes set out in the Charter, primarily the achievement of peace, security and stability, the promotion of friendly relations and the encouragement of economic cooperation between States.

In a speech delivered by President Saddam Hussein on 17 January 1999, Iraq called for an assembly of various institutions to be established by interested States to agree upon statutes and charters with a view to achieving serious cooperation in the economic, political and military fields in order to preserve balance and bring about peace, starting with Asia and questions related to it. That assembly would not be directed against anyone, but would be aimed at protecting its members and at legitimately defending their security and interests as well as international security, in accordance with established humanitarian norms. From this rostrum we call upon the peoples and States of the world that have faith in the values, culture, freedom, independence, justice and equity of the nations and peoples of the world, to consider President Saddam Hussein's proposal with a view to initiating a dialogue aimed at turning the proposal into a reality that would help achieve balance, peace and security throughout the world. Moreover, many States, including permanent members of the Security Council, have explicitly called for a multipolar world in which political, economic and military balance prevails, in the interest of maintaining international peace and security.

The United Nations adherence to the principles set out in its Charter and the full and fair implementation of its resolutions, without selectivity and discrimination, is the benchmark of its credibility in restoring the trust of States in its ability to achieve justice and peace and to encourage States to comply with and implement the provisions of its resolutions.

The United Nations, in particular the Security Council, should implement its resolutions on the Middle East, primarily those relating to the question of Palestine, and should support the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people to regain their legitimate and inalienable rights to live on their national soil in Palestine. It should also support their struggle against the Zionist colonization of their territory and their fight to establish a sovereign independent State on their national territory, with Jerusalem as its capital.

The United Nations must implement its resolutions on making the Middle East a zone free from weapons of mass destruction. In particular, it should implement paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991), which considers Iraq's disarmament a step towards establishing in the Middle East a zone free from weapons of mass destruction. So far the United Nations has taken no steps in that direction.

In conclusion, the realization of the concepts of justice, democracy and development throughout the world is subject to the fair democratization of international organizations, in particular the United Nations. These concepts can be achieved only through carrying out an interrelated series of administrative, structural and political reforms of the United Nations, its agencies and organs so that it can shoulder its responsibilities under the Charter, primarily its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The meeting rose at 1.50 p.m.